

# AROUND THE GRAIN : SYSTEMS/INCISIONS ADAM FIELED



## Introduction

Huysmans' allegorical fable "Against the Grain" shows us subjectivity begetting solipsism through full and totalized sensory immersion, to the exclusion of the Other and otherness. If this particular collection goes around the proverbial grain, rather than against it, it is because I am opening the widest possible purview of perspectives, as a signal given that, in this new century, the Other and otherness can not only not be ignored, but must be included in every text which hopes to either palimpsest over the discourses of earlier centuries or merely (as the Vermeer on the cover depicts) change forms into new forms, or move what is fluid from one solid vessel to another. If there is a coyness inhering in my usage of "around," as it was a key-word and catch-phrase employed by Jacques Derrida and the Deconstructionists, it is meant (frankly) as a half-critique: as Deconstructionism was the foremost discourse of the late and perhaps entire twentieth century and, in its quest to fixate its textual compass on destinations built into textuality itself, what this group steered around was just as important, discursively, as what they included, and what I have sought to include in "Around the Grain." That no leeway was given to those pursuing ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological ends, and that (to be simpler) metaphysics in general was considered passé, I look at the edifice of Deconstructionism and have the dual aim of making a thorough tour of it and also investigating what conclusions other centuries have come to about the relative importance and ultimate relevance of different forms and manners of discourse.

If the twenty-first century, in its infancy, calls out for the German Idealists is a matter different thinkers can answer for themselves. My decision to invest time and energy in German Idealism has to do with going back to the roots, the solid grounds of discourse, rather than the spinning arabesques of the last fifty years, and daring to envision a century (which this may or may not prove to be) in which the fundamental question built ineluctably into human consciousness can have their way with texts and discourses, rather than the other way around. What do we know? What is knowledge? What dwells within us or without us, in our consciousness or spinning out into the ether? Do we have souls, and, if so, what is a soul? The central mistake the

twentieth century made (and the mistake was made both in the United States and in Europe) was believing that in the humanities, these fundamental queries, which are our rightful inheritance from our most sapient forefathers, could be stuffed like so many wet leaves into a trash-bag and be forgotten forever. In fact, the effete sense that language is the sole receptacle for all of human consciousness and endeavor could not be retained forever, because these questions must compel humanity as long as our individualized sense of subjectivity baffles us into awarenesses of their importance. So, these are the basic grounds from which this collection harnesses its dialectical energies in different directions. I hope interested audiences might find it of some use.

Adam Fieled, 2014



# **SPACE BETWEEN: A NEW GESTALT APPROACH TO ONTOLOGY AND AESTHETICS**

**ADAM FIELED**



## Apologia

I have taken the liberty, in this collection, to introduce this sentence into a presupposed matrix of philosophical discourses: “There is space between time, space between space, and space between causes.” Whether or not it is boldly presumptuous to do so is an open question. The necessity for “Space Between,” as a linguistic sign representing an ontological “incision,” was born from an acknowledgment, “past” Heidegger, that Dasein (Being-In) could engender an “adjunct” of commensurate power, which could extend it indefinitely into a new century and its projected discourses. Space Between is not “over” Deconstructionism and the deconstructionist discourse, but subsists on either side of it—affirming its status as signification, self-aware of its own textuality, yet grounded in belief that its status as what I call “meta-rational” (capable of being “presence” for perceiving subject as a site for balance and “linkage” across subject/object alterity lines) transcendentalizes it so as to carry itself across (also) into the purely ontological (balanced and linked to Heidegger behind it).

To configure most of “Space Between” as discourse “around” the sanctioned discourses which dominated twentieth century thought, is to look at the invented “compressed matrix” form on offer here—a vista for representing connective tissue (“data”) without recourse to obfuscations of any kind; also a representation and affirmation of “presence” (metaphysics, in Derrida’s thought), in the general sense, and of the possibility of ideological and intellectual purity, against the communistic “decoys” of what has become standardized, in the Western academy and elsewhere. Compression is a formal representation of Space Between—a manner of widening the expanse of Dasein, against the contractive impulses of Deconstructionism and the prolonged occurrence of the post-modern.

Adam Fieled, 2013, Philadelphia

- I. Changes: Aesthetics and Ontology**
- II. Changes Pt. 2: “Into” Ontology**
- III. Various Notes on the Soul in relation  
to Space Between and the  
Purification Chain**

# **CHANGES: Aesthetics and Ontology Adam Fieled**





# **AESTHETICS PT. 1**

## **Adam Fieled**



## THE CHAIN OF PURIFICATION

### SECONDARY MODES

Invention

World (H's)

Dionysian

Clearing (H's)

Intellect

Idea (S's)

I-You (B's)

Content

### PRIMARY MODES

Formal Rigor

Earth (H's)

Apollonian

Concealing (H's)

Physicality

Will (S's)

I-It (B's)

Form

- These opposites exist in a symbiotic relationship in a work of high art.
- These opposites purify each other by persevering in balance, rather than conflict, as Heidegger claims, and in the manifestation of both beauty and truth.

H= Heidegger

S= Schopenhauer

B= Buber

- Schopenhauer's conception of the aesthetic: the artist, he claims, is capable of seeing things apart from the forms of the principle of sufficient reason; apart from space, time, causality, and as Platonic forms, ideas. This is true, inasmuch as the artist has been trained and attained to formal rigor. The problem with Schopenhauer's schema is that he perceives genius as a manner of seeing, rather than doing. Most educated people can train themselves to see things independent of the principle of sufficient reason; what we might call transcendent will, the possession of few, is accessible to many. Formal rigor, the "in-itselfness" of particular works of art, is possessed by few and accessible to few. Formal rigor is inborn (ineffable) talent met by patience and perseverance; these are the virtues of genius, and they have little to do with modes of seeing.
- Schopenhauer goes on to remark that, in effect, men of genius are like blinkered horses, clumsy, errant, irrational, easily used and manipulated. History teaches us, however, that geniuses from Picasso to Byron to Chaucer are just as inclined to manipulate as to be manipulated. Genius is a form of power, a kind of knife, and to hold that knife, and to know that you hold it, is to become a kind of avenger. Time, space, and causality are mere forms, no more or less real than the forms of art, so genius is free to play as it wishes; and it doesn't relate, it swallows.
- Intellectual naivete is linked with the idea of a universal genius. Genius is relative, subject to the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, to change, impermanence, uncertainty. "Genius" cannot be resuscitated fully to save us.
- This is the moral purpose behind creativity: to save our capacity to find our way past the forms of the principle of sufficient reason. Those pursuing formal rigor are, as Nietzsche would say, arrows of longing for the other shore: prolonged occurrence, extended emotion, eternal Eros.
- John Keats, in "Nightingale," dramatizes the artist experiencing the momentary sensation of transcendent will; transcending, in the process, the forms of the principle of sufficient reason (in "Hyperion," this objectivity is implied.) The poem's intricate, sublimely musical prosody exemplifies formal rigor; its' conception of the original innocence (or beginning or soul) of nature is fundamentally inventive in acuity of personal, psychological perception. Keats revels in what Rilke calls nature's "dim delight"; a manifestation of the open, the being of beings in their Heideggerian "shieldedness." So Keats' "world" is nature; his earth is himself. He reveals a desire for concealment from selfness through nature; yet nature is seen to be "clearing." Keats conceals himself through the physical act of creation, which purifies an idealized nature.
- Keats in "Nightingale," also: he is standing in relation to his nightingale, which is perceived as an archetypal manifestation of the openness of nature; he is, in Buber's words, "confronted bodily," drawn into a saying of I-You; yet, in the expanse of the poem, Keats must relate the nightingale as a thing, an experience, an It. So Keats' expression, his I-It, is purified by the world of his relation. Thus,

I-You in a work of art is something interior; I-It is something outwardly manifested; but before the I-You can be manifested as an It, it must be felt as well as thought. Feeling mediates thinking and materializing in a work of art, as a purifying agent. Just as the manifestation of objectivity in a longer poem like “Hyperion,” is purified by a sense of the poet’s empathy, which invents the possibility of catharsis from an apotheosis of blank verse as a form.

- Heidegger argues that the poet moves us from the “unshieldedness” of purposeful self-assertion, production, marketplace, technology, to the open, the pure draft, the venture, nature, the being of beings. Yet much of modern poetry features a reduced sense of naturalness and a heightened sense of artificiality. Eliot’s “Prufrock” and Baudelaire’s “Flowers of Evil” and “Paris Spleen” showcase this sense of purposeful self-assertion, of the artificial. Heidegger does not address the preponderance of urban decay and urban despair in the psyche of Modern poetry, that gives rise to the artificial character of an Eliot or a Baudelaire, and the generations which followed them. The city, in modern poetry, becomes a revelation of the unshielded; and the revelation of form tempestuous with conflict.
- Formal rigor is, in itself, a mode of unshieldedness, of purposeful self-assertion, production. When it is purified by invention, formal rigor takes on the qualities of earth, in the Heideggerian sense; newly willed earth, produced earth, just as “Prufrock” is the invention of an archetype, man as apotheosis of irony. As such, nature, the being of beings, the pure draft, is itself purified, in a manner of speaking, by a happening of truth, the purposeful self-assertion of the unnatural quality of the age. “Prufrock” has as a constituent level romanticism’s signature melodic style in irony’s minor key.
- Baudelaire, in “The Gaming Table,” proclaims himself to be “Envy creatures their tenacious lust/ These rattling skeletons their deadly mirth/ Envy all of those who gaily thrust/ Honor and Beauty to rot beneath the Earth.” Here: a longing for unshieldedness, nature as unnatural, and Man, with his capacity for abstract thought (reason), who cannot venture but to purposefully self-assert, to emerge out of artifice. Baudelairean invention, his world, entails a movement into the unshieldedness of withdrawal.
- Schopenhauer ascribes to the intellect a secondary place in human consciousness, less important than the fundamental and basic character of will. We have seen, on the purification chain, that in a work of high art, will is correlative to formal rigor (physicality, earth, grounding, etc) and idea is correlative to invention (intellect, world, bestowing, etc). It is clear that in high art contexts, the preponderance of

formal rigor must make itself felt. A purely imaginative work without sufficient grounding is less effective than a purely formal work without sufficient invention.

Adam Fieled 2001-2013

## **INTRODUCTORY NOTES TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGY: THE META- RATIONAL**

### **The Meta-Rational Argument**

That the being of things consists not of our notions of them, nor our ideations of them; nor do things consist of the Kantian thing-in-itself or as independent entities; rather things consist of the balancing link between the thing-in-itself and our ideations of the thing-in-itself. The balance between these two points of consciousness cannot be perceived alone; what is needed to comprehend it is a sense of the meta-rational. The meta-rational is not, like the irrational, posited against the rational; rather, it is the step beyond mere rationality, the point at which foreign elements become important to consciousness.

- There is space between time, space between space, and space between causes.
- This space between is, in one sense, an intuition.
- Space Between, in this sense, is an intuition of Being.
- Space Between cannot be named except as such; naming entails a certain confinement.
- Space Between can possess us between thoughts.
- Space Between may be seen as an extension of the principle “Negative Capability” beyond aesthetics.
- Space Between, in fact, may be seen as what consciousness is between thoughts.
- Space Between in the selfness of what is beyond us.
- Space Between, as transcendent will, is solid being congealed in a momentary sensation.
- The mind must divide originally because the body itself is a plurality.
- The mind’s structure finds its mirror in the body’s plurality; but the mind’s wholeness is not self-apparent.
- The body is plural, yet it moves together; the mind is plural and moves plurally; that is, it is capable of moving in many directions at once.
- The mind moving the body is conscious thought; the body moving the mind is unconscious impulse (thought).

- Plurality is the ultimate dividing thought.

Adam Fieled 2001-2013

# **Various Notes on Aesthetics and Ontology**

**Adam Fieled**



## **PROLONGED OCCURRENCE**

### **THE META-RATIONAL**

### **SPACE BETWEEN**

Existence of things (being) as balancing links

- positivism of the “tri-circuit” around “balance” of energies within the Kantian phenomenological “lightning bolt” gestalt.

## UNDOING DERRIDA “AROUND” METAPHYSICS

Heideggerian model’s preponderance  
around metaphysics, meta-rationality  
of the circular or “womb over wombs”:



Deconstructionist model  
“U-Structure”: parallelism/  
infinite extension/essence-being  
at base:



“returns to the metaphysical nexus”  
“groundless extension”

## **Further Notes on the Purification Chain (from “Aesthetics Pt. 1”)**

Will must take its predominant place in the higher arts over Idea because it is the existence of the world as Will which necessitates art— not the phenomenological lightning-bolt around modern philosophy from Descartes forward, but the existential forms of consciousness around the principle of sufficient reason— competition, conflict, rancor, discord, or even the harmonies between wills which form the inverse of this.

Idea, or world-as-Idea, purifies raw expressions of individual and individualized will by transcendentalizing it, towards universals and archetypes. World-as-Idea is largely missing from twentieth century art, which lost its sense of the Ideal towards meta-levels of dismemberment and nihilistic exhibitionism— thus, my return to Hamlet, Hamlet’s idealism, as a drastic antidote to a system bent towards expression of the will’s facility and little else. Art desperately needs imperatives derived from above rather than below— to be purified by Primary Ideas, to restore its own Secondary connection to Idea/the ideal.

With the exception of Picasso and a few others, the sense of the Apollonian was lost in twentieth century art. It has to be a Primary Mode on the purification chain because the Apollonian in serious art is another way of saying “history”; and because formal rigor and “history” are so closely correlated as Primary Modes that it is often difficult to disentangle them from each other. The twentieth century was America’s— and, as the creation of America enacted the dissolution of history into socio-linguistic disguises, the twentieth century was compelled to disguise the preponderance of history and formal rigor behind Invention within the chaos of the Dionysian.

Heidegger’s “concealing” for me (and to some extent Buber’s “I-It”) is a metaphor for the adequate objectivity of the work of serious art— that is, the Primacy of concealing over “clearing”— a representation of the horizon of levels of symbolic complexity— symbolic representation is art’s adequate objectivity. Serious art is, and must necessarily be, complex.

If the Purification Chain enacts a purification process within itself, it is because it represents its own aesthetic ethos, assembled to mirror (even spatially) what it assays within the purview of the new century— twentieth century “mirrors” were funhouse mirrors in comparison— even if the chain imposes complex cognition which itself is compelled to mirror (in thought-chains) what saturates it, in both directions (the Purification Chain and the work of art)— so that the ideal energy around the Purification Chain is triangular— and that serious art and aesthetics should substantially enhance and enrich cognition is presupposed.

Twentieth century art is largely cognitively impaired— all its mirroring processes affirm the inventive Dionysian “cleared” of history, but disguised in the American manner by a simulacrum of theoretical rigor; carefully disseminated by the donnees of large fortunes.

Adam Fieled, 2013

## THE PURIFICATION CHAIN AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Twentieth century art and what I call the “will’s facility”—corrosive, simplistic ironies express the will’s facility in modern and post-modern art, including literary art—that “Will” is pure conflict of will-against-will which cannot be transcended into Idea—and that dismemberment against Idea creates a World-mirror which perpetually expresses contemporary relevance—nihilism of the “trans-aesthetic” (Baudrillard)—embrace also of the “sinister” against Idea (America)—these are the structures of most twentieth century universals and archetypes—anti-universals and anti-archetypes set below “Earth” as pure “World”—the twentieth as a “Secondary” century, according to the Purification Chain.

Barthes and structural aesthetics—“text” as transcendentalizing Idea against a superficially embraced contemporary—twentieth-century Academics as “World” not purified by “Earth” (moral, ethical, intellectual relativism unredeemed by humanism of “Earth”)—Barthes’ “bliss-texts” engendering bliss of pure Dionysian invention against formal rigor/history—Robbe-Grillet as simulacrum of “up” drug or stimulant—“World” concerns force structural aesthetics into (also) a simulacrum of the comprehensive.

“Textuality” in post-modern theory as a safe-guard against Earth encroaching upon World—“materiality of the text” as signifying in a positive way a haute simulacrum of corporate America—Baudrillard’s “Disneyland against Disneyland”—and the frailty/fraudulence of Baudrillard’s meta-linguistic constructs—illusionistic effects as simulacrum of “cocaine buzzes” and Los Angeles—socio-linguistic disguises as America against America—post-modernity as pure Will and closed circle of significations and anti-significations.

Facile Will in post-modern scholarship—reduction of text, formal rigor/history, to an easily deconstructed, World-grounded American circus which the scholarly text ellipses into an invented, Dionysian collage of surfaces—a simulacrum of “Abstract Expressionism” around formal rigor/history, cast into the world of conference and publishing “action painting.” The American academy spent the second half of the twentieth century wearing a Warhol Factory wig—academic texts as “silk screens.”

New Historicism—world-as-Idea in English Romanticism dismissed along with transcendentalism as another “cocaine buzz” or collage of surfaces—New Historicism’s radical mistrust expresses the complicity of World against Earth which makes post-modern scholarship a simulacrum of American military and militaristic “butchering”; the New Historicists as this: a frenzy of textual wills against the existence of Earth in a worldly (and Dionysian) rush to Invent.

The twentieth was the century of Invention against history (formal rigor)—America necessitated that what was Invented needed to destroy/dismember—not World but Earth was “fractured,” in the modern/post-modern sense, by American militaristic imperatives—world-as-Idea disappeared not only from aesthetics but from the Western populace—idealism was replaced by reception velocity, on different levels, and

convenience. Trans-aesthetic mentalities butchered money into an Idea, expressing the will's facility in creating contexts dominated by material imperatives against Earth/humanism, in and out of the purely aesthetic.

Mutated form of modern/post-modern collages— dismembered parts assembled again arbitrarily— convocation of America and Europe into a waste land cohesive enough to be represented aesthetically— Eliot as dismembered “site” for these processes— Eliot's purification chain is one on which nothing connects, all the modes are dismembered— bleeding into a new century in which the process of symbiosis again exists.

Adam Fieled, 2013

## SPACE BETWEEN AND AESTHETICS PT. 1

“There is space between time, space between space, and space between causes”

Formal rigor, as a primary mode, has a certain way of filling up space— both in the formal structure of works of art and in the space filled by “history” in the general sense. Formal rigor creates in the Subject new spaces “against” the conventional constraints of Dasein (being-in) (Heidegger). Space issues from formal rigor into circular temporal structures against being-in-the-world; what the circular temporal structure represents is being-into-Earth, transcendent will.

Formal rigor-as-history expresses itself in perceived verticality of “circle over circle” subjectivity as a transcendent mode of Dasein, for an Ideal subject, drastically “concealed” and concealing: being-into-Earth.

History subsists, in/as space, as its own formal rigor— perceived “between” forms and ideals of form. History’s vertical temporality subsists between extended horizontal planes of temporality and Dasein, as continued Invention.

Invention is horizontal and “a” horizontal in time and Dasein; balancing the Primary/vertical with representations of contextual “World”; Secondary facets of Dasein; expressing existence as meta-rationality in spaces between Dasein as pure horizontal being-in-the-world.

Apotheosis of balance in “links” totalized towards a refined interpretation of Dasein— meta-rationality— expressing/expressive of ontology to aesthetics and back again— aesthetics being a Secondary mode of Dasein itself— the Primary mode of Dasein being the meta-rationality of Dasein with/to/in Dasein, above the dichotomy of the horizontal/vertical into extensions of Space Between, in links.

Adam Fieled, 2013

# **CHANGES PT.2: “INTO ONTOLOGY” Adam Fieled**



### **The Purification Chain “Into” Ontology**

<b>Primary Mode</b>	<b>(Space Between)</b>	<b>Secondary Mode</b>
Kant/Idealism phenomenological “lightning bolt” gestalt form	Dasein (Being-In) as balancing link the meta-rational space between	Derrida/structuralism language as “lightning bolt” gestalt form enclosed within Kant, pure Idealism



## From a reading of “Writing and Difference”

### Primary Mode

“simultaneity”/ “force”  
meta-rational “force of linkage”  
Idealism

### Secondary Mode

phenomenology as “occultism”  
formalist materialism of Derrida

(purity of Dasein,  
language “Being-In”  
metaphysics)

Simultaneity of language “striking,” “Being-In” metaphysics, enclosing it, striking at the same time—

Space Between the materialist/formalist security “Dasein” of structuralism as it “forces,” enclosed in the Ideal-Kantian-Platonic “Dasein” Primary Mode, as a meta-history of philosophy as a series of “forces,” enacting a simultaneous structure mediated by meta-rationality conferring perceptible and perceived “linkage” on constituent “lights”—

**“The Compressed Matrix as...”**

**Primary Mode**

“narrative without discourse”

purely “objective” language  
away from the “comfortable”

temporal/spatial “circularity”  
rather than linearity (Dasein)

**Secondary Mode**

site for formal rigor/invention  
from the PC “into” ontology

linguistic representation of Dasein

### **Advantages of the Compressed Matrix (and the Purification Chain)**

The Compressed Matrix form is not susceptible to the “decoys” of sanctioned philosophical discourse.

The absolute formal rigor of the Compressed Matrix is purified by “absolute invention” guaranteed by the imperative to compress.

In the context of the Compressed Matrix, Idea must exist in purified balance with assertions of will, and repetitive will-assertions excised.

The Compressed Matrix form affirms Otherness by presupposing a pure and purifying Other, perceiving from the primary mode of Idea and the Ideal.

## Space Between, Ontology, and Romanticism

“Leveled articulations” decoy an “I” purified by the space between will and idea, world and earth, into a mutable form which rests, at different intervals, in different spaces between on structures which emphasize the vertical, crowned by a “top,” self-perceived and represented version of space between— not negative capability, but a capability held in consciousness which has negativity as a primary mode and positivity as a secondary mode, working horizontally “at the top” in balance and space between to balance (and thus, romantically, sanctify) space between and Dasein as equal but not equivalent primary modes.

Dasein and Space Between as being “off” the Purification Chain by roughly equal importance (importances), both in aesthetics and “in” ontology— an entity which cannot effectively create and sustain the one without effectively creating and sustaining the other— Dasein encloses Space Between, Space Between extends Dasein, into a reciprocity which has in it the inevitability of the strictly empirical.

The romanticism of reciprocity between Dasein and Space Between— Dasein as the ideal male and Space Between as the ideal female— mirrored in romanticism’s ability to configure non-dualistic moments (sans the horror of one turning into two) of Being-In passion and intellection, and finding space between towards a reciprocity between the temporal and a capacity for anti-temporal (“timeless”) aesthetic/symbolic representation.

Space Between and Dasein as an interrelation “past” the Purification Chain, which is fastened to the lower “tiers” of its subsistence as practically manifested Ideal in aesthetics and ontological thought— Keats’ nightingale as representation of Dasein, the construct of Keats’ himself, with his representational abilities, as Space Between “in” the Romantic. The inversion of the phallic act of poetic composition “against” Space Between being purely feminine is the space “beyond” Dasein here.

## **Space Between and Dasein**

Space Between and Dasein, separately or together, presuppose states of unity-within-perceptive consciousness, “one-ness.” Constricted into halves by violence or opposition, Space Between and Dasein are forced to descend from their own verticality to World and Will, opposing violence by an act of mirroring them with Earth and Idea “into” Space Between and Dasein again. The process ends in a “third,” which, by encompassing “two,” is also one.

Descent down a vertical axis and up again— agents of the Purification Chain in states of “exchange” crossing it in parallel horizontals— Space Between and Dasein are capable (make no mistake) of violence together, impositions of unity— against impositions of alterity or, when they are unavoidable, assimilating them into triangles bent back cleanly into a consolidating vertical axis— the “face” made by Space Between and Dasein together is always behind itself, “in itself,” and representation, in its representation of ultimate interiority, of the meta-rational, possibilities of “balance” and “linkage.”

Meta-rationality as consolidated alterity— in its consolidation, three becoming one again— avoidance via direct acknowledgement and transcendence of the horrible and false singularity of “two” and “two-ness”— Space Between, Dasein, and the copula— Space Between is Dasein and vice versa, all in the intermixing of boundaries and depths, center-places and edges, structures and differences in and “between” them.

Ontological thought not only “in” but “as” a compressed matrix structure, to be used not only discursively but instrumentally— a weapon against ideological “maze” structures, depths which are against depths which are not— one to three, back to one, then up to the solidity of “four” when ontological consciousness is developed towards the purity of gradual, “linked” (meta-rational), temporally extended verticality.

Adam Fieled, 2013

**VARIOUS NOTES  
ON THE SOUL IN  
RELATION TO  
SPACE BETWEEN  
AND THE  
PURIFICATION  
CHAIN**

**ADAM FIELED**

## **Definition of the soul in relation to Space Between**

Space Between is being “incised” with the presupposition that not every human being has a soul.

Space Between finds the human soul, or “a” human soul, to be definable “past” empiricism, into the possibilities of the meta-rational.

A “soul,” in relation to human society/existence, is a nuanced, well-rounded response (the soul becomes a soul by being responsive, representing responsiveness) to presence, metaphysics, Dasein, difference, and/or the principle of sufficient reason— the principle of individuation within the constraints of space and time, within (Being-In) a perpetual acknowledgment of the Other and the thing-in-itself.

As to what constitutes “nuance” and the “well-rounded” in this context— Space Between requires adequate objectivity, granted by the subject, to emotion, cognition, the principle of subject/object (alterity), and the long-term processes which inhere in these— and, if deep imperfection is also presupposed, Space Between requires an acknowledgment of imperfection within presence, metaphysics, Dasein, difference, the principle of sufficient reason, etc (enabling the reinforcement of the meta-rational, “balance” and “linkage,” between souls).

To distinguish between “soul,” as constituted by Space Between here, and Nietzsche’s “uber-mensch”— a soul, in its own sense of being completed-in-being, does not need to “soar over”— once the spokes of the soul-wheel have been forged, they can become operative on any level necessity forces them to roll on, or over— Space Between, if forced to subsist in an atmosphere or context of the subaltern, retains its “gestalt” level of wholeness or roundness, as representation of (among other things) Space Between and Dasein (Being-In) in symbiotic relation.

All the primary modes of soul and “soulfulness” (Dasein, difference, metaphysics, Space Between, etc) have the potentiality to be purified by secondary modes— any nuanced manifestation of “sensibility,” being-in acknowledgement and response to the Other, or Others, or Otherness in general— and the soul, as constituted by Space Between, must perpetually invent itself in its own pure and/or empirical intuitive awareness and awarenesses, against and with difference, the principle of sufficient reason, etc.

Adam Fieled, 2013

## **Aesthetics and the soul in relation to Space Between**

As I have defined “soul”— a well-rounded, nuanced response to individuation (and the philosophical forms which represent it as a mode of consciousness, positively or negatively— Dasein, Space Between, difference, the principle of sufficient reason, metaphysics, presence)— a correlation subsists between “soul” and, in aesthetics and aesthetic thought, “major high art consonance”— major high art consonance also subsisting, in works of art, as representation of well-rounded, nuanced responses to principles of division and individuation, will and world against earth and idea.

The Purification Chain, once pushed “into” ontology, enacts the meta-rationality which subsists “before” empiricism, between the soul and major high art consonance— the soul, in its potential gestalt purity, as primary mode, purified by the secondary mode of major high art consonance— Space Between enabling a process of precise, well-rounded, nuanced mirroring so as to demonstrate, enact, and represent the soul, in such gestalt form that a significant number of souls might be emotionally and cognitively moved, and simultaneously— the meta-rational as agent of Space Between, affirmation and consolidating co-agent of Dasein.

The soul cognates, and is cognition; the work of major high art consonance subsists within itself, once it is complete and being-in-the-world; the one Becomes and is Becoming, the other is and remains over long periods of time to facilitate the process, purifying Ideas and the Ideal in consciousness by representing why and how the will might be bound by its relationship with world and the vagaries of the developed and developing idea(s) configured, in aesthetic form, by Space Between.

What the work of major high art consonance imposes— not just the capacity, in the Aristotelian sense, to affect a catharsis— but to presuppose Space Between in its audience, and thus impose a standard of cognitive and affective competence— or fluency— a “whole” or wholeness meant to locate the interstices of Space Between and Dasein in a presupposed Ideal or “whole” audience, and enhance an already fluent cognitive/affective competence— up to and including menacing/macabre representations of the sublime or overwhelming, representations of death, death-processes, world and will strung tight in compressed matrix form against earth and idea.

The soul, to be purified by the work of major high art consonance, must take the ideal female form of Space Between to receive the Dasein of the performance— the work of major high art consonance allows the soul, smoothed over in its spatial-temporal Being (Being-In) into Space Between, to reproduce itself in purified form, and to sustain itself in ideal purity for a certain indeterminate length of time once the performance is finished, “felt” and cognated.

Adam Fieled, 2013



## **The Kantian compressed categorical matrix in relation to Space Between and the Purification Chain**

<b>Primary mode</b>	<b>(Space Between)</b>	<b>Secondary Mode</b>
“objects-in-time”		“numbers-in-space”
Objects-in-time can evince the well-rounded intelligence and responsiveness, on cognitive and affective levels, of Being-In “soulfulness,” Space Between engendering a “soul”; soul-potentiality subsists in objects-in-time.	Space Between, that numbers-in-space and objects-in-time purify each other when endowed with “soul,” so that cognitive faculties of “objects” (assuming the subsistence of a soul-in-itself) may respond and express their “spatial relations” and cognitive-affective ramifications of such.	Numbers-in-space create spatial relations and abilities to manipulate objects; but numbers, in and of themselves, are not capable of Being-In “soulfulness,” are not a unity, and are only expressive-responsive in their relations, rather than within themselves.

**The soul in relation to all other constituent components of the thing-in-itself in human consciousness, on the Purification Chain**

<b>Primary Mode</b>	<b>(Space Between)</b>	<b>Secondary Mode</b>
“The Soul”— a nuanced responsiveness to complex affective and cognitive information as regards individuality and individuation— present in some humans.	Interstices where data is accumulated, stored and assimilated from the will and ideations into the soul.	“The Will and Ideations” parts of consciousness which contain competitive drives and capacities for raw cognitive functions.

Space Between enables the soul to purify “will and ideations,” and will and ideations develop and purify the soul (or potential soul) by granting empirical experience of both world and earth, objects-in-time.

## **Formal Rigor and Invention (from the Purification Chain) in relation to the soul**

### **Primary Mode**

Formal Rigor—

how the soul relates to different levels and forms of “history”— familial, national, sexual, cultural or otherwise— and how these situate the soul in time and space, present and future.

### **(Space Between)**

Where history and the contemporary purify each other in appreciation of the human soul’s unchanging “substance,” the permanent durability of its interrogations and their linguistic nuances. Language as agent of “soul” in Space Between.

### **Secondary Mode**

Invention— the soul’s specific circumstances and the unique configurations around it which necessitate “inventive” self-conceptions, oriented around the contemporary.

# EXILE AND EXEGESIS

## 261 and Nightingale

I am continuing develop connective tissue, in a critical context/framework, between Keats' Odes and the Cheltenham Elegies. Taking "Nightingale" and 261 ("Never one to cut corners..."), and a shared visionary sequence between the two poems— Keats in his poem, through the process of composition (Poesy, and its "viewless" wings), is able to extend the reach of his vision into the dark woods to co-mingle/commiserate with his synecdoche; just as the protagonist of 261, on the viewless wings of Poesy again, is able to "pull a rough U-turn" ("Here's where the fun starts...") on Old York Road at midnight, and thus join the ambiguous hero/anti-hero of the poem. This, doubled between the two poems, enacts a transmigration process which is an outlet and a subtext of the visionary, and temporally freezes the sense that what the nightingale/ "rogue driver" of 261 signify— night, death, physical mortality, but also an inverse (perverse) owning of dark freedom and power— is matched by a negatively capable textual engagement.

Never one to cut corners about cutting  
corners, you spun the Subaru into a rough  
U-turn right in the middle of Old York Road  
at midnight, scaring the shit out of this self-  
declared "artist." The issue, as ever, was  
nothing particular to celebrate. We could  
only connect nothing with nothing in our  
private suburban waste land. Here's where  
the fun starts— I got out, motherfucker.  
I made it. I say "I," and it works. But Old  
York Road at midnight is still what it is.  
I still have to live there the same way you do.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Here is an interesting discrepancy: the "I" in 261 (important, also, to note that the rogue driver's U-turn being made in the poem may be turning back to Cheltenham) manages to turn the proverbial tables on his companion (rhetorically/textually) twice ("But Old York Road at midnight..."), thus re-living the U-turn twice, rather than Keats' singular journey into the dark woods. Keats does not begin to develop any kind of bravado against his Muse; conversely, the two textual U-turns in 261 demonstrate first, an ostensible escape from Cheltenham (which amounts to an assertion of personal or individual, artistic success), and then a renascence to a position that what Cheltenham and Old York Road signify are omnipresent in the human continuum; and both express bravado in both individualism and intellectual mastery. So does Keats enter the sensuous, shadowy paradise of the woods and then sink downwards, first into being grounded, then (as an extension) into Lethe-consonant (forgetful) despondency; and these are two textual journeys of visionary identification and self-transcendence. The possible inversion, in which Keats' Ode, through its ultimate sense of lost, demeaned, defeated yet sensually self-aware consciousness, against textual flights or "Fancies," constitutes a kind of elegy, while the Cheltenham Elegy, through its ultimate air of sangfroid and mastery (empowerment over harsh circumstances) demonstrates, if not exactly *odal joy*, certainly a sense of a kind of textual *tour de force* being enacted in a compressed space, an ambiance of the explosive, which is not in Keats. The nightingale and 261's rogue driver (Chris) are both phantoms, essentially: rhetorically addressed, evanescent. The negatively capable identification process occurs once in the present (Keats, appropriate for an ode) and once in a visioned/visionary past (261, appropriate for an elegy)— and it is merely textual, unperceived, unappreciated by one inhuman Other (the nightingale) and one human Other (Chris). The ultimate destination, why the identification process is enacted, is for the imagined, individual reader-as-third party.

## Ambient Ghettos 2

One reason Apparition Poems got its title is that, between the spatial dimensions of different sectors of Philadelphia and its ornate architectural elegance, one gets the sense of ghosts, specters, and apparitions here, hanging in the air in a way that some find intoxicating, some do not. As I said about Temple University and the Eris Temple, those who find an interest in attraction/repulsion circuits (things, ocular vistas or otherwise, which attract and repel at the same time) will have much to ponder as they walk Philadelphia streets. Attraction/repulsion also leads, circuitously, to thoughts of salvation and damnation; and who the saved and who the damned are is another pertinent Neo-Romantic subtext (beyond post-avant's obsession with mere edginess). If Philly has an interesting relationship (also) to philosophy, it is because the relationship of our architectural constructs to the sky, the heavens, and to a widely disparate scene on the ground, lends a sense of transcendentalism to the city, and to attempts to forge higher worlds, aesthetic and otherwise, from it. This is all leading to this Apparition Poem:

There are gusty showers  
in Philadelphia, showers  
that beat up empty lots,

down in sooty Kensington,  
you could almost believe  
what the books say about

being-in-the-world, I mean  
being in a damned world, it  
really does seem that day

on greasy days in Philadelphia.

The circular nature of the poem around Philadelphia-as-topos gives it an air of being self-enclosed, self-completed, a whole, round circuit. The circle involves time, temporality, which has as one of its more graceful manifestations the temporal circle, where (in whatever context) you finish where you started. One of the grand subtexts of Philadelphia— architecture versus time/the temporal and space— is mirrored here, as the scaffolding of the poem creates a square around the circle of the poem's temporal conceit. The “gusty showers” and “greasy days” of North Philadelphia depend, if we posit some aesthetic satisfaction in them, on a broadening of viewpoints towards a recognition that surfaces belie interiors, and what looks damned might actually be saved, and vice versa. This is Baudelairean territory— salvation and damnation are not English Romantic topoi that much— and the Philadelphian Prowler may well be more, in his/her *Noir* orientation, simpatico with the Symbolists then with those consonant with the replenishing powers of trees, birds, and flowers. To be forced into a kind of Purgatory, against century XX, by architecture— such is the fate (through Philly Free School and otherwise) of Philadelphia in 2014.

## Dry Ice

The “dry ice” approach to serious poetry— I-it employed over I-thou— forms an interesting chiasmus with what I call Inter-Dialogism. When you want to jump over the hurdle of ordinary consciousness into the consciousness of another, however briefly, and if the Other in question is set at a natural distance from you, as can happen in many contexts, the result can be insight or a mystified sense of helplessness. Think how this works in terms of worldly power— militaries, judicial systems, governments— and how individuals who fall under the aegis of these conglomerate interests are forced to make their points and gather their information. If you meet another personage, with the insignias of worldly power on them, one way or another, your attempt to make the Inter-Dialogic leap may or may not be hampered by timidity, reserve, prudence, intimidation, coercion, or a sense of being toppled by protocols. Often, if the Inter-Dialogic leap is to be made and the insight gleaned (leading to whatever further action the situation or context demands), it must happen quickly, once the powerful party has somehow been shocked into revealing themselves. Worldly power, as relates to the individual consciousness of those who bear it, can create a brain white-washed by its own armature of complexities and protocols, which make it so that, when both partners in a conversation have vested worldly interests, Inter-Dialogism is beleaguered by the dry ice of no intimacy whatsoever, and often, no brain symmetry (interchange of nations). Everything remains resolutely impersonal, even as, as everything created by the human brain, political armature must show cracks and strains, and those skilled at noticing those cracks and strains can make an Inter-Dialogic leap towards figuring out another consciousness. This all manifests in Apparition Poem 1345, from Apparition Poems:

Two hedgerows with a little path  
between— to walk in the path like  
some do, as if no other viable route  
exists, to make Gods of hedgerows  
that make your life tiny, is a sin of  
some significance in a world where  
hedgerows can be approached from  
any side— I said this to a man who  
bore seeds to an open space, and he  
nodded to someone else and whistled  
an old waltz to himself in annoyance.

The situation appears severe— the protagonist of the poem is spinning out an allegory for someone we assume to be a government or military functionary. The purport of the allegory is the idea that

when the human race plans to move forward, forcing individuals to worship forces that degrade, abase, and trivialize their lives usually, and needlessly, disrupts human progress. As to why the Inter-Dialogic needs of the protagonist swerved him towards employing this allegory— the functionary's reaction would have to reveal, one way or another, at least a part of his brains, and thus make the situation more comprehensible to the protagonist. Thus, the whole Inter-Dialogic interchange has to happen without there being any personal emotion involved at all. Inter-Dialogic reactions dry iced this way, without any personal emotion, when represented in text, are a taste some may have more than others, just as the first, dry iced set of Apparition Poems may be preferable to some over the more personal Cheltenham Elegies. Here, what is set forth is a situation in which the functionary's reaction— annoyance— leaves in enough ambiguity that the reader must decide for him or herself if a real Inter-Dialogic leap has been made or if the protagonist misjudged his adversary. He has attempted to initiate a battle of mystification— a sense that boundaries are being crossed, so that who is mystifying who becomes an open question. This reality is, as I said, political more than personal, just as the Elegies have politics built into them only on secondary levels. Why dry ice in serious poetry is interesting as an aesthetic effect is that most sensitive temperaments understand that the dry ice effect has its own aesthetic grandeur, just as Shelley's snow and ice storms in Mont Blanc are strangely, eerily gorgeous. As for 1345, the poem ends with the situation seemingly power-blocked; allegory told, allegory rejected; and yet we know that in politics, responses can germinate over long periods of time. Thus, the battle of mystification works for the reader too, who will be unable to predict either the precise context of this battle (no precise playing field, like Cheltenham) or how it may turn out in the end. The entire edifice is on ice.



## Emotion and Inter-Dialogism

How do the emotions of individuals play into, or out of, Inter-Dialogism? To make an Inter-Dialogic leap into someone's brain and out again, and glean whatever you can, presupposes in the individual making the leap that personal emotions will not interfere with the process. Obviously, human consonance being what it is, this cannot always be the case. The murkiness of making an Inter-Dialogic leap while one's emotions are wreaking havoc with one's ability to perceive truth is a fact of life, both in literature (the more personal varieties of literature) and in our daily lives. In fact, the core essence of both Meta-Dialogism and Inter-Dialogism are threatened by their potential chiasmus with chaotic, disheveled, impenetrable emotions, and by the sense that without the objectivity that manifests along with emotional detachment, both of these leaps become mere leaps of faith, unsteadied by a relationship to what might be called intuitive empiricism. This plays out in poetry, literature, and drama, in the manifestation of unreliable narrators, characters desperate, destructive, unlucky, and emotionally unsteady enough so that, as intuitive as they might be, neither we as an audience nor they can ever really be sure they are drawing the right conclusions from whatever situation might be at hand. Inter-Dialogism is dogged by subjectivist interests every time, so that rose colored or dark colored spectacles take raw data and misshape them or configure them out of proportion. Apparition Poem 1488 is a case in point— a representation of a harsh situation— complete severance of contact with the beloved in question for the protagonist— with no reason given. Whatever Inter-Dialogic leaps have been made on both sides have led to stalemate; even as the protagonist, as besotted as he might be, must adopt the dry ice approach in discussing his predicament:

liquor store, linoleum  
floor, wine she chose  
    was always deep red,  
    dark, bitter aftertaste,  
    unlike her bare torso,  
        which has in it  
        all that ever was  
        of drunkenness—  
to miss someone terribly,  
to both still be in love, as  
she severs things because  
    she thinks she must—  
    exquisite torture, it's  
    a different bare torso,  
(my own) that's incarnadine—

We assume here that there have been Inter-Dialogic leaps on both sides. Yet, if these are two emotionally vulnerable, emotionally unstable individuals, what has been communicated from brain to brain cannot sink in and be assimilated the right way. This is especially the case if booze is involved, which confuses boundaries and senses of proportions and forces things to flow in a warped direction. That warpage gives 1488 an eerie glow, and an edge (hinging it back to what I used to call *post-avant* poetry) of strange dimensions and unclear leaps, unclear consciousness. The significance of the linoleum floor as a symbol is that it works as a synecdoche of all the different forms of warpage on offer here— alcoholism, emotional desperation, overactive imaginations, and

(perhaps most tragically) Inter-Dialogic leaps which suggest both some purity of intention and some genuine psycho-affective chemistry, but which are getting trampled by the inhumanity of the landscape these characters inhabit. Linoleum floors are cold, un-homely, homogeneous surfaces, which reflect (also) the coldness of the complete severance between the two in question. The warm, companionable, sensuous side of drunken-heartedness— *vino veritas*, also— is being buried by consciousness which can no longer have stable reactions, so that what has been learned from the requisite Inter-Dialogic leaps knitting soul to soul cannot be recalled and skillfully employed the right way. It may be the case that the muse of 1488 knows this, and that it accounts for her severance of the relationship. If so, the protagonist has a ways and means of accessing a note of pure pathos, which resounds in the poem, even as he also reveals that his assumed mastery of his muse's heart, and what it has in it ("all that ever was/of drunkenness"), has to be false, because he seems not to know the reason for the sudden severance, which should be clear to him. When Inter-Dialogism is nullified by subjectivist interests, consciousness can fester and transform itself into all shapes and sizes of narcissistic delusion, even as the protagonist in 1488 attempts to reach beyond his narcissism.

## I posit no boundary between us

The line in the title poem of Posit (I posit/no boundary/between us) is one I'd like to parse, in reference to what Neo-Romanticism is meant to be in the humanities world in 2017. If looked at objectively, an argument could be made that Modern art, post-modern art, and Deconstructionist literary theory are all largely constituted by a *succession of boundaries*, and a succession of boundaries effect. In other words, the works of art, and the texts, are a game and a gambit against both intimacy, and the possibility of intimacy, between reader/viewer and creator. Deconstructionism configures intimacy as naïve, as both an intention and a possibility, largely through the perceived obtrusion of the arbitrary into language and linguistic significations. Modernity and post-modernity lean heavily on alienation tactics and irony motifs. To torque Wilde, the *importance of being earnest* is lost. Yet Deconstructionism must withstand its own contradictions; as Roland Barthes enumerates how we might be *seduced* by texts, it must be understood that what is seductive in textuality is, in itself, the possibility of writer/reader intimacy; and that intimacy can only be a viable possibility if what is arbitrary in language is balanced and offset by what in language and linguistic symbolization is *purposeful* (as Wordsworth would have it), and penetrant into the psyche of those who read and experience the text.

Neo-Romanticism is, in fact, predicated on a belief in the efficacy of aesthetic symbolization, and (specifically), *the positing of no boundary between creator and viewer/reader*. Neo-Romanticism, on a primordial level (manifest, perhaps, from a ricochet to Philadelphia's buildings), believes in itself, and believes in its audience. Why the Dusie chap Posit, which ten years ago was ricocheting across the country for the first time, was more a statement of intention than I at first perhaps perceived, is because I failed to grasp the underpinnings of the work itself (and of The Posit Trilogy which came later) in regards to the primordial compact I unconsciously projected onto it, as I created it; a self-regulated, self-sustaining world of good faith, good intentions, and genial good will towards whoever might choose to read the text. The Neo-Romanticism which arose from Aughts Philadelphia does, in fact, attempt to take the first person singular and make it genial again. There cannot be a "you," a second person singular, without an "I"; and the significance of poetry's primordial perspective, an "I" addressing a "you," is that it becomes a Heideggerian sheltering device against what might corrupt it from without. The succession of boundaries effect embedded in Modern and post-modern art, the creation of more and more vast distances between reader/viewer and creator, is not an effect Neo-Romanticism finds interesting. Formality is another issue, and off the table here; but, suffice it to say, formality creates the inherent genial good will of a rich relationship to history and histories, continuity of consciousness over long stretches of time.

When formality is shifted into place as a prominent element of a literary text, as in The Witches of South Philadelphia, the genial good will of the artist is to, among other things, fulfill an imperative function that both Deconstruction and post-modernity largely lost: to entertain, edify, and enlighten the reader on the highest possible cognitive level. Readers read the poem because they enjoy it. This seems simple; it is not, in practice. Literature in the American Academy is so painfully onerous, as a Babel-level enterprise or (often) anti-enterprise, that literary types stick to books as a mode of self-abnegation and self-abasement. As a graduate student, I worked under a professor once, and I endeavored to bring this complex to the surface. We stick to these texts, I said, because we enjoy

them; we study literature because we like it; correct? You'd be amazed that he was nonplussed enough that producing an answer seemed, to him, inadvisable and impossible. I never forgot the sense I had that here, folks, was an impostor; someone doing something for the wrong reason, whatever that reason might have been. Posit, *The Posit Trilogy*, *Witches*, and the rest are all aiming to cut out the proverbial middle man, academic or not.

## Intimations of Immortality: Odes, Elegies, and Politics

The critical fallacy inheres in discussions of English Romanticism that Keats is the least political of the major Romantic poets. Ostensibly, Keats' subject matter is not directly political: the odal cycle or vision (and Hyperion in addition) addresses subjectivity, temporality and spatiality, history (classical antiquity), epistemology, and the poet's relationship to tactility, especially in the form of natural objects/vistas and expressed hetero sexuality. Yet, specifically in *Ode to a Nightingale*, a reckoning is enacted which takes Keats straight to the heart of a political dilemma which has plagued mankind since classical antiquity and before: what is the place of extremely developed and expressed individuality, visionary individuality, as it were, in an individual, against the conformist masses, held under the protective aegis of conformist societal contexts? Adorno's "Lyric Poetry and Society" initiates many pertinent inquiries on this level. How I would like to elevate the discourse to the next plateau is to up a certain kind of discursive ante by tackling a trope which has lost some status over the last few hundred years, especially in the textual morasses created by, and around, post-structuralism: immortality. Specifically, as a topos to investigate in poetic texts and other literary contexts: who is more immortal, the visionary, with his or her extremely developed interiority, set in place against societal norms, or any generalized normative; and the ethos and praxis of the conformist masses themselves, with their standards of regulated behavior and (more importantly) regulated cognition. These issues present themselves nose on the face in the penultimate stanza of *Nightingale*:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in fairy lands forlorn.

Nightingale puts Keats' entire visionary odal system on a tightrope, as he boldly confronts this its potential obsolescence. What makes the nightingale immortal, here, is its sense of being indistinguishable from all other nightingales, whether singing for Ruth or not. Those not touched by the stigma of extreme individuality (here of a visionary nature) have their safety and immortality in numbers; while an "I" developed to an absolute peak of sharp cognitive-affective incisiveness is so vulnerable, through its singularity into isolation, that it can only feel the pangs of mortality and impending death beating behind and in front of it at all times. The politics of this dilemma is simple: any given society must decide for itself to what extent individuals may develop themselves as distinct, autonomous entities, against the normative, or to what extent this process must be nipped in the bud. The critical commonplace of the isolated Romantic genius does apply here, as does Adorno; but what is added is the sense of potential longevity in configuring things from one end of

this to the other: who gets to be immortal, Keats or his replicant, replaceable Nightingale? This fits snugly into (also) an exploration of the Cheltenham Elegies. The analogue to Nightingale, 261, manifests in no uncertain terms the same syndromes and dichotomies:

Never one to cut corners about cutting  
corners, you spun the Subaru into a rough  
U-turn right in the middle of Old York Road  
at midnight, scaring the shit out of this self-  
declared “artist.” The issue, as ever, was  
nothing particular to celebrate. We could  
only connect nothing with nothing in our  
private suburban waste land. Here’s where  
the fun starts— I got out, motherfucker.  
I made it. I say “I,” and it works. But Old  
York Road at midnight is still what it is.  
I still have to live there the same way you do.

The protagonist of the poem has the same sense of systematic, incisive insight as Keats does in the Odes. Here, the antagonist, who represents (among other things) the typical and the normative individual trapped in a society which values destructiveness and the continued predominance of crass, stunted lives, is not a Nightingale but the driver of the Subaru in question. For discursive sake, let’s call him “Chris.” Who Chris is, as an American archetype; the suburban daredevil or show-off, with the same blarneying sense of indestructibility, backed by the despair of immobile, low-minded interests; is meant to appear as immortal as the visionary poet, who laments in an elegiac way the pointlessness of the world as it exists for both characters. The problem here (or tightrope, over which the elegiac system must walk) is that, for those for whom major high art consonance is anathema, Chris will always remain a more eternal character than the autonomous, visionary artist.

What, or who, is immortal here is a political issue; not just because the masses tend to propel the masses forward, and Chris is resolutely one of the masses, but because even the notion of immortality-in-art (a fixation for both these Odes and Elegies) is a vulnerable one, before the mind-numbing force and obduracy of mass indifference and resentment (including the disdain of literary theory and theorists, post-structuralists, New Historicists and others). The Odes have been given a high place, over two hundred years, in the canon of English literature. The Cheltenham Elegies have only begun to have the life they are destined to have. Yet neither the Odes nor the Elegies are for the obdurate masses, who are (very much) eternally and immortally impervious to the siren call of advanced textuality. That high art is nonetheless a political force on high levels and for all time is also manifestly and demonstrably the case, no matter how eternally impervious the masses are. The artist must stand alone, with his or her visions, against the imperviousness of the masses; perhaps with a Romantic sense of sublimity, perhaps not; but the politics of Keats dictates that the politics of what endures, of what is meant to be immortal and what is not, of how far an individual may go to extend his or her individuality against the masses, is one which will remain a tightrope to be walked and a pertinent issue for as long as anyone wishes to create major high art consonant work.

## Irony and the Elegies

As to what is revealed, in the Elegies, by Inter-Dialogism and Inter-Dialogic interactions— the leap of the consciousness of an individual into another’s consciousness, and then out again— we have seen that all Inter-Dialogic revelations are merely partial. No one can see or reveal anyone else’s brain in totem. But partial revelations are also conduits to revelations of irony— that what is revealed, what emerges on the surface, might be contradicted by something unseen, once the one consciousness is repelled out of the other. A case in point, of irony emerging from Inter-Dialogism in the Elegies, is 420:

### I.

The Junior Prom deposited me (and fifteen others) on the floor of her basement. I could barely see daylight at the time, and at three in the morning I began to prowl. I was too scared to turn on any lights. She emerged like a mermaid from seaweed. I needed comfort, she enjoyed my need. We had gone out— she was bitter. The whole dialogue happened in shadows. No one was hooking up in the other room, either. You spiteful little princess.

### II.

Whether off the bathroom counter  
or the back of your hand, darling,  
your unusual vehemence that  
winter night, cob-webbed by  
half-real figures, was animated by an  
unfair advantage, which stooges threw  
at you to keep you loopy as you  
died piece-meal. All I had  
was incomprehensible fury and a  
broken heart— when I hit the floor  
at four, you were getting ready  
to play fire-starter, opened  
the little snifter, curled your finger  
twice in the right direction; darkness—

The way part one of the Elegy concludes— “You spiteful little princess”— suggests the emergence of a duality. The heroine/anti-heroine of the poem is, in the context of the poem, a spiteful little princess— yet, if she were only that, if she were a one-dimensional character with no dynamism built into her consciousness, would she be worth writing about? The same applies to the hero/anti-hero in 261; we know he brings his dare-devil streak to the surface, and that he reacts negatively to the Elegiac Protagonist pulling rank for his status as an artist in Cheltenham; yet the way 261 concludes establishes a kind of parity, so that the Elegiac Protagonist has ways and means of insinuating that there is more to this character than meets the eye. The surface level or layer of the character is then riddled with ironies, and the potentiality of /for drama, through shocks and surprises, as was true of Psyche in the early Aughts. Intuition is a key to these revelations— what

Inter-Dialogic interactions reveal to intuition, the hidden depths of another's consciousness, are what make the figures in the Elegies, hopefully, both compelling and dramatic. If I have succeeded, bombast has been avoided, as well; and the avant-garde principal against sentimentality and sickly preciousness upheld, even as narratives are established.

The aforementioned intuition is not just the writer's, or the Elegiac Protagonist's; it is something to be held and to function in the consciousness of the reader as well. How the reader reacts to the dramas in the Elegies depends on what intuitively strikes him or her as interesting or provocative. As to what the dire battle is in 420, and whatever else the spiteful little princess might be hiding, the leap can be made also into what the Elegiac Protagonist wants from her here— what kind of comfort, physical or emotional, or both— and back into the position that she has certainly leapt into his brain, seen what she has seen and then been repelled back out again, and then acted accordingly, and spitefully. Does she have reason to be tiny-minded and spiteful? Readers need to act on their hunches and expand their consciousness into this frozen moment, and live out part of the drama between the two brains for themselves. Then, they can begin the labor of establishing, if they care to, who is more spiteful, and tiny-minded, amidst the Noir-consonant darkness.



## Jenny Kanzler

I met the painter Jenny Kanzler in 2008. I was sitting in the Last Drop one weekend afternoon in April or May, working, and she approached me and introduced herself. She was very pretty in a cherubic way, not unlike Abby Heller-Burnham. Over the course of 2008, we had coffee many times. I wouldn't call these tete-a-tetes dates—Jenny was otherwise engaged—but we got to know each other with some thoroughness. Jenny, both in her paintings and in her life, had a fascination with “the stunted,” in general terms—stunted people, stunted situations, even stunted animals (she found tarantulas “exquisite.”) She also had a fetish for violence and gore—the films she liked were violent, and the art. Jenny had been at PAFA along with Abby and Mary, but she usually declined to discuss them. I got the distinct impression that they were not among her favorite artists there. Mary's *The Fall* was showing at PAFA precisely when I met Jenny Kanzler, in fact. She gave it a mixed review. There was some sexual tension in the air between myself and Ms. Kanzler, but she made clear that she was mostly a Platonic soul. Abby and Mary were floridly liberated, eroticized, and romantic in comparison, despite Jenny's attractiveness. Yet, Jenny did have a singular mind and a singular vision. She made a strong impression on me. It seemed to me that the substitution, in Jenny's art, of violence for love and sex was a deliberate one, but (this was my own prejudice) not necessarily a healthy one. Jenny's penchant for violent, rather than sexual, smut, was what inspired *Apparition Poem 1342*, along with the sense, mistaken or not, that Jenny was sublimating so that the part of her psyche which wanted her to remain a stunted little girl would stay untouched, unchallenged, and inviolable:

What's in what eyes?  
What I see in hers is  
mixed greenish silence,  
somewhat garish, it's  
past girlish (not much),  
but I can't touch her  
flesh (set to self-destruct),  
anymore than she can  
understand the book  
her cunt is, that no one  
reads directly, or speaks  
of, there's no love other  
than “could be,” but I  
think of her throat cut—  
that's her slice of smut.

The phenomenological import of the poem is a torque of *Elegy 414*—I privilege myself to do a break-in into Jenny's brain, and have a look around. The problem with phenomenological break-ins is that it is difficult to ascertain whether what you are seeing is real, is really someone else's brain, or if what you find is just a projection of your own fantasies. It could be that Jenny's “slice of smut” is more involved in real emotion and intellection, not just a product of stunted adolescence, but there was no way for me to tell, as I was writing, whether this was the case or not. In fact, I believe the break-in in 1342 is brash enough, pompous enough, even, as a male narrator violating a woman, that this *Apps Protagonist* seems like a half-pig. If he is correct in his assumptions, however, his piggishness has still won him intercourse with a woman who has denied him conventional entrance.

It is worth noting that I didn't fight Jenny this way— no passes were made, nor did I have the experience of falling in love with her— but the bullying energy to understand her made for some strange, loopy mind games between us, and our gaming against each other on cognitive levels lasted a few years.

To broaden the context— by 2008, the Recession era was starting to sink in, and much of the grandeur of Aughts Philly, the romance and the sense of freedom, were beginning to fade. For Jenny Kanzler to enter my life at the time she did, and for us to become sparring partners rather than lovers, was a sign of the times for me, an inversion of the odal early Aughts, and some of the hard-won victories of the mid-Aughts, too. A beacon also, perhaps, inverse-shining towards a realization of the Great Recession, and what it was to become. It's also germane for me that by 2008, an emergent, notable Philadelphia painter's generalized equation involved violence, gore, and the stunted to sexualized expressiveness; where all of America was headed was into a meat-grinder of violence, moral/ethical bankruptcy, and generally entropic conditions, and those of us who wanted the Aughts, which facilitated art around sex and romance, to go on forever, were to be bitterly disappointed.

## Kierkegaard and Dry Ice

The complex relationship between Inter-Dialogism and philosophy cannot be simply or succinctly enumerated. When consciousness leaps into other consciousness, the basic questions of phenomenology remain the same— what is inside our consciousness, what is outside, what is held or bounded in or by consciousness, and what is not— only issues of individuation, difference, and distinction manifest to lead any inquiry into any number of both theoretical and semantic quagmires. When philosophical issues are addressed in serious poetry, the potential and actual arabesques out into cognitive space become innumerable, especially when Inter-Dialogism is used in a new capacity. What happens when, as often happens in philosophy, allegorical figures are employed? From Socrates to Zarathustra to Abraham, philosophical texts must lean on symbolic representations of individuals, to delineate the essences of philosophical dilemmas and interests. Abraham, we know, was Kierkegaard's major choice is his most pivotal text— Fear and Trembling— and he, as an author, asks us, as an implicit “you” in an I-thou relationship, to attempt to leap into Abraham's consciousness when the Lord asks him to climb the mountain and sacrifice his son, seemingly for no reason, and testing Abraham's faith, sharpening his faculties of perception. Apparition Poem 1613 subsists as both an interpretive vista onto Kierkegaard and a tangential representation of an implicit “I” who has been able, it would seem, to achieve the requisite Inter-Dialogic leap into Abraham's consciousness, though we know Abraham to only be a figure in an allegory, rather than a partner in any intimacy:

Follow Abraham up the hill:  
to the extent that the hill is  
constituted already by kinds  
of knives, to what extent can  
a man go up a hill, shepherd  
a son to be sacrificed, to be  
worthy before an almighty  
power that may or may not  
have had conscious intentions

where hills, knives, sons were  
concerned, but how, as I watch  
this, can I not feel that Abraham,  
by braving knives, does not need  
the one he holds in his rapt hands?

What the implicit I sees in 1613 is a kind of loop around unconscious processes of governance— that God himself may rule the Universe from a center of consciousness or not, and that the subtle mental strength Abraham gains from contact with this Universe Force unconsciously begins to direct his thoughts and actions, which take on consonance with being sharp, incisive, knife-like. The final loop, we see, is that, in a binding chain, the “I” in the poem becomes sharp, incisive, and knife-like from Inter-Dialogic interaction with Abraham (and it is implicit by this time that Inter-Dialogic interactions may happen with characters in allegories and their unseen creators, as well as flesh and blood people), who has inherited his incisiveness from the Universe Force whose consciousness or unconsciousness cannot be gauged or mastered. If the dry ice rule applies here, as it does for most of Apparition Poems, it is because all philosophy, as heavy as it is on intellect and allegory, is

touched by dry ice, and I-you queries ride shot-gun to the objectivism which must drive the enterprise forward and turn the proverbial steering wheel. Is some real I-thou intimacy mixed in? To answer this brings us to a philosophical critical crux which is very strange— strange, in 1613, because the protagonist seems to be (mystically, uncannily) attempting an Inter-Dialogic leap into our brain, as he (unconsciously) sees what he sees, and steps back out again, leaving a sense behind that philosophical awareness can be governed by unconscious processes and impersonal forces all the way through, just as many of the most salient Big Questions, both for science and philosophy, are impersonal ones, and can only be conjectured at in an impersonal, if not unconscious, manner. The implied “you” in 1613 is rather rare (and an interesting parallel to the "you" Saint Augustine is eventually granted in *The Posit Trilogy*), and demanded by a literary context; a merely philosophical context would stay in the third person; but, in attempting a bridge and a chiasmus between philosophy and literature, and, as is also the case in 1617, aids the reader in feeling a sense of humanity amidst all the objectivism and dry ice. Yet, the contradiction inheres that in addressing the Big Questions on any profound level, it is almost always individual consciousness which is able to produce breakthroughs in science and philosophy, cloaked in the impersonality and objectivity (governed, also, often unconscious processes) of the third person. If poetry is able to enter this game seriously, the first person singular must re-make itself as explicit, and personal, to give whatever construct is at hand the insignia of the aesthetic (including poetry's imperative-to-song), and allow the reader graceful entrance.

## Melopoeia and Time

The tradition in serious poetry, of poets anthropomorphizing impersonal forces (Love, Time, Beauty) is a rich one, even if it fell into disuse in the twentieth century. John Keats, for example, will always address impersonal forces like Love, Time, and Beauty in a personalized, I-thou manner. He thusly imposes on the aesthetic context the resolutely personal (odal) world which is his insignia. The Modernists and post-modernists found Keats, and Romanticism, naïve for this anthropomorphizing proclivity; yet, the tunnel vision they imposed on poetry, involving the hegemonic power of the impersonal, objective, and synthetic, shuts down the humanistic and the imaginative in a surfeit of emptiness and unmusical banality. As for how this issue is dealt with in Apparition Poems— if Time, for instance, is to be anthropomorphized— one compromise solution involves taking Time and making it a dry iced, impersonal “it” in an I-it chiasmus situation. Thus, the perceived gaucherie of making everything personal is avoided, even if a confession is also made that impersonal forces like Time may stand in Inter-Dialogic relationships with our consciousness, metaphorically jumping into our brains and making incisions, not out of a conscious will, but out of unconscious, emanated power (like the God-force adumbrated in 1613). Time, of course, is merely (as Kant teaches us) an intuition, something our brain imposes on what matter is empirically given to us, and also an aid to register perceptible changes in matter. The problem, for the poet swimming in these waters, is that human consciousness generates emotions about these processes. So, we have Apparition Poem 1067:

I want to last—  
to be the last  
of the last of  
the last to be

taken by time,  
but the thing  
about time is  
that it wants,

what it wants  
is us, all of us  
wane quickly  
for all time's

ways, sans “I,”  
what I wants—

One of the oddities here is that melopoeia, and melopoeiac tension/release games, compensate for the frustration of the protagonist's circular Inter-Dialogic interaction with time as an impersonal force, impinging on his consciousness. The music manifests in clusters, which is one accustomed manner/mode of melopoeiac practice, and in end-rhymes as well. The Inter-Dialogic tension here—the knowledge that anthropomorphized time “wants,” in an impersonal fashion, to co-opt and destroy everything I, as an individual, either have or have created— makes it so that the poem, which begins with “I want” and finishes with “I wants,” has in it a sense of metaphysical exploration of combined interactions between personal and impersonal forces, what has perceptible bounds and

what does not. The problem with the poem anthropomorphizing Time is that the poet's instinct to do so, though it jibes with his aesthetic intentions, must nonetheless be riddled with the doubts and inconsistencies of consciousness reaching too far past itself, and its own empirical understanding. The principles of pure reason— Kant's top rung of what human cognition can achieve— can only speak of Time as an intuitive force in human consciousness, and not strictly knowable past that. We do not know if Time-forces inhere in the universe which manifest some form of consciousness or personality. They might. To the extent that the poem sketches a semantic and melopoeiac circle in space, where the end and the beginning are rough parallels, what is suggested is a sense of stalemate with an impersonal force which cannot help but touch us, in both Inter-Dialogic interactions and out, while also manifesting evidence that no consciousness can inhere in it, and the personal and the impersonal become so hopelessly intermixed that the poem gets lost in its own music. To be lost in melopoeia, while also dry iced by an I-it perspective, makes the poem its own kind of hybrid, built of parts which ache to transcend their limitations and know what is not readily known, even as what is shown to consciousness here is frightening and frustrating.

## Menace and Foreboding

One subtext of the entire enterprise of the Cheltenham Elegies is that the significations of the American suburbs must change. From the dulcet and the banal, the suburbs acquire an aura of menace and foreboding. How the menace and the foreboding are incorporated into our view of the American suburbs connects directly to Inter-Dialogism. What happens when the leap from one consciousness into another is made, and what is seen is perceived to be a direct threat to the individual who initiates the leap? This may happen in a number of different contexts, including social situations in which individuals are not only required to keep their cool, but to maintain the wonted placid façade that is the suburban insignia. Even more murky are situations in which the individual who makes the Inter-Dialogic leap perceives a genuine threat, with some genuine intimacy snuck in on another side of things—in other words, the insignia of betrayal. This goes beyond mere troubled brotherhood, into a place in which the drama of life and death is so intricately complex and elaborately woven that everything (again) is lost in ambiguity, and love and hate are impossible to distinguish. This is where the individual with Inter-Dialogic tendencies (like the Elegiac Protagonist) gets beaten back with his or her own limitations—emotions take over, and where there is any sensitivity, it is lost in confusion and despair. Keats inverts this process, in the Odes, into being lost in a haze of sexualized, musical ecstasy—the Odes and Elegies find two parallel lines towards consciousness losing itself, in self-transcendence towards dissolution into higher realities. As the Elegies' blackness meets the Odes' whiteness in the Gyan chap, a foundation is built of wonder around the possibilities of poetic language. Yet, in Elegy 260, we finally come face to face with the brick wall in all the Cheltenham characters' consciousness—they cannot let go of their pasts, and replay all the most important scenes of menace and foreboding in their heads endlessly, in an eternal loop:

I was too stoned to find the bathroom.  
'The trees in the dude's backyard made  
it look like Africa. You were my hook-up  
to this new crowd. The same voice, as always,  
cuts in to say you were fucked up even  
then. You had a dooming Oedipal  
complex. We were all wrapped tight,  
even when we got high. I was the  
only one getting any, so you both  
mistrusted me. African trees & easy  
camaraderie. A primitive pact sealed  
between warring factions— my spears  
(take this as you will) for your grass.

The characters here need to have an intuition, a sixth sense. The need to be able to intuit who around them is for real and who isn't. The problem with the Elegiac Protagonist here is that he isn't completely simpatico with them. He appears to be an accessory to them, and nothing more. Yet, his sixth sense informs him in this memorized loop ("The same voice, as always...") that he is being betrayed somehow by someone he cares about, probably the hero/anti-hero from 261, and there is nothing at all he can do about it. Elegy 260 is rather unique, among the Elegies, because it does not come to any definite conclusions; in fact, the poem ends before the action starts, leaving the readers to configure for themselves what the nature of the action exactly is, and what the betrayals might be.

When betrayal of individuals is involved, Inter-Dialogism becomes profoundly horrible, a waking nightmare which brands individual minds for all time with the decisive moments which made or broke them. The funny twist involved in 260 involves sex— that if the Elegiac Protagonist is about to be excluded from something important, his success with women is what may be standing in his way, which has caused hatred and resentment to migrate towards him, and this betrayal. In the suburbs, the fates of individuals are often decided sotto voce, and in the kind of accents which may accompany the reading of weather on TV or a game show host's opening monologue. Quietness and stillness do not preclude viciousness and petty larceny to souls. All the menace and foreboding built into Cheltenham as a construct have to do with these levels, and with the sad, sick sense that suburban deaths are potentially as banal as suburban lives. That the Elegiac Protagonist lived to tell his tale cannot efface the Inter-Dialogic horror of whatever he sees in his friend's brain here, and the Meta-Dialogic defense mechanism voice he has developed to counter it ("you were fucked up even/then"). Where this leaves Inter-Dialogism is a variegated place which can cover the gamut of human thoughts and emotions. Elegy 260's version of Inter-Dialogism is one of the hardest, and also the most realistic— in Cheltenham, as in much of the rest of the human world, human life, often claimed to have some sanctity inhering in it, is actually, in practice, as cheap as a dime, and treated with the extreme lowliness of those who live in the dirt.



## Noir Resonances

Built into Apparition Poems as a literary construct, and as a textual embodiment of what I call a “noir” or “deep noir” sensibility, under the aegis of the Neo-Romantic (and of post-avant behind it), are resonances from poem to poem, and from poem-sequence to poem-sequence. You could call these resonances textual “games” of a sort, and when two or more poems game with or against each other, the resonances between motifs, linguistic structures, and approaches to textual development highlight, in microcosmic form, what constitutes the text as an epic in fragments. Here, I would like to investigate the game between two Apparition Poems— 1341 and 1488— and thus demonstrate how a representative Apparition Poem game works. The motifs I see intermixed in this game— drunkenness/intoxication, possible alcoholism, Philadelphia as a site for both interpersonal drama and textual creation, heterosexual (here) games between men and women, over both sexual and psycho-affective issues, and an unnamed epic protagonist’s relationship with language itself, and with his own cognitive capacities— recur throughout this *nouveau epic* text, and as it weaves its wayward course, this particular nexus serves to underline the labyrinthine depths (and heights) towards which the text attempts to ascend:

Secrets whispered behind us  
have a cheapness to bind us  
to liquors, but may blind us  
to possibilities of what deep  
secrets are lost in pursuit of  
an ultimate drunkenness that  
reflects off surfaces like dead  
fishes at the bottom of filthy  
rivers— what goes up most is  
just the imperviousness gained  
by walking down streets, tipsy,  
which I did as I said this to her,  
over the Schuylkill, two fishes.

liquor store, linoleum  
floor, wine she chose  
    was always deep red,  
    dark, bitter aftertaste,  
    unlike her bare torso,  
        which has in it  
        all that ever was  
        of drunkenness—  
to miss someone terribly,  
to both still be in love, as  
she severs things because  
    she thinks she must—  
    exquisite torture, it’s  
    a different bare torso,  
(my own) that’s incarnadine—

The motif of drinking/drunkenness has to occur throughout Apparition Poems— the characters who inhabit the text tend to be excessive rather than moderate, and indulgent rather than abstemious. Why 1341 and 1488 both make incisions into the nature of drunkenness— “ultimate drunkenness” and “all that ever was of drunkenness”— is that drunkenness is seen not to be simple but complex, a multi-tiered state of consciousness which might move consciousness itself (and the relationship of consciousness to language) in any number of different directions. Yet, the dark-hewn nature of Apparition Poems, its stance in shade rather than light, draws us to the abyss that whatever the “all” of drunkenness is, it must be redeemed in our re-exploration of states of drunkenness in text, not necessarily as a state of consciousness in itself. The obvious facets of the drunkenness game here— that social contexts and sexualized relationships can drive us to drink in 1341, and that some humans choose to dwell permanently in drunken states of psycho-affective torpor in 1488— are undergirded by a meta-consonant sense that engagement in certain forms and levels of textuality have “all that ever was of drunkenness” built into them, and that the seemingly sober composer of the two poems has inhering a drunken sense of the possibilities of dual meanings and other games as redemptive of/for the self-respect of cognition, and its possible enchantments, of which drunkenness is one. “Drunkenness” is also a specialized version of Philadelphia; as a city of romance and intrigue, intoxication, passion. Aughts Philadelphia was, in the broad sense of the word, romantic— freedoms to indulge were enjoyed there.

On another front: the sense of heterosexual, sexualized relationships between men and women— one of the backbones of serious art for the length of human history— had been edited out of serious avant-garde poetry a long time before my arrival, for no good reason and against the natural proclivities of most would-be poets. I have no problems with queerness or queer art whatsoever— many of my Aughts Philadelphia compadres were queer— but I felt that, for myself and for the greater good of the art-form, a re-introduction of passionate, sexualized (“experienced”) hetero interest would be both healthy and germane to this text’s sense of itself (sentience) as an epic (the formula works also for ballads and other forms, as in *The Ballad of Robert Johnson*). Sexualized, hetero relationships with drunken, semi-alcoholic Philly as a background, sequestered in the racy Aughts, up the tactile ante against the merely cognitive, or even merely cognitive-affective, gaining an upper hand; and these two Apparition Poems together seem to be about the same relationship. That the relationship is tempestuous, encounter based, and also hinged to a secret-whispering social nexus, add a broad range of coloration and perspective tricks which make the poems work in an engine like way together, towards the conclusion of 1488 in heartbreak and a sense of entropic loss.

The loss, it should be noted, is epic, even if rooted in a series of fragments— pitched to a high frequency both of intellect (level after level of semantic scaffolding from line to line) and of emotion. The sense of gravitas-in-passion, mixed in with sex, booze, and Aughts Philly energy, is uniquely situated so that some audiences will miss the intricate sense of the poems as word-machines, systematically checking and balancing themselves for achieving the unique, simultaneous prosodic effect of maximum coherence/maximum complexity.

## Notes: Elegy 420/St. Agnes Eve

The twentieth century didn't bequeath us much, literature-wise. But I do like T. S. Eliot's famous aphorism: "Immature artists borrow; mature artists steal." The Cheltenham Elegy I would like to discuss does steal a crucial image from Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes." If you put the Elegy next to the relevant stanza of Keats' longer narrative poem (not an Ode, but sharing the Odes preoccupation with celebrating oddities and inverting poetic clichés), what emerges is a paradigm model of where the last two hundred years have landed us, as regards what constitutes innocence and experience, virginity and consummation, expectancy and satiety, and what historians chose to call Romance against what I choose to call Noir:

### I.

The Junior Prom deposited me (and fifteen others) on the floor of her basement. I could barely see daylight at the time, and at three in the morning I began to prowl. I was too scared to turn on any lights. She emerged like a mermaid from seaweed. I needed comfort, she enjoyed my need. We had gone out— she was bitter. The whole dialogue happened in shadows. No one was hooking up in the other room, other. You spiteful little princess.

### II.

Whether off the bathroom counter  
or the back of your hand, darling,  
your unusual vehemence that  
winter night, cob-webbed by  
half-real figures, was animated by an  
unfair advantage, which stooges threw  
at you to keep you loopy as you  
died piece-meal. All I had  
was incomprehensible fury and a  
broken heart— when I hit the floor  
at four, you were getting ready  
to play fire-starter, opened  
the little snifter, curled your finger  
twice in the right direction; darkness—

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,  
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;  
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;  
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees  
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:  
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed,  
Passive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,  
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,  
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Oddly enough, Eliot's mermaids in "Prufrock" occupy a median space between Keats' innocent, angelic Madeline, and my "spiteful little princess." Eliot aside, both "St. Agnes" and 420 involve festivities— and the celebration of St. Agnes Eve in the Middle Ages (where Keats acquired his narrative plot) was just as garish and ostentatious as a Cheltenham Junior Prom. Yet, the Elegy and the semi-Ode share a preoccupation shared, as a concern, by myself and Keats— what happens in darkness, in hidden or concealed spaces, far from the proverbial madding crowd, against what would be known on the surface levels of society and its terms of acceptance or acknowledgment. Porphyro is asking for an elopement, and is accepted; the first person protagonist of 420 asks for solace, on any level, and is rebuffed. That both poems emerge as fully sexualized, on a hetero level, is foregrounded by this comparison— a mermaid is a kind of siren, and carries feminine glamour with her wherever she goes, even in darkness (underwater, perhaps, in this tableaux).

420 foregrounds this ambiguity— is the protagonist asking for sex (a renewal of what has been extinguished, in the poem), or just a loving verbal interchange, or both? He receives, from his mermaid, neither, while Porphyro eventually receives both. That is a critical crux between Romanticism and Noir, as a new mode of visionary Realism (which carries under its aegis, also, post-avant)— many stereotypically Romantic poems end happily, with a sense that conflicts have ended in a kind of fulfillment, textual or narrative, intellectual, emotional, or physical. The bleakness of Noir (or post-avant) signification guarantees that what is anodyne in Romanticism can never appear— and readers may find Noir either airless and claustrophobic or Romanticism weak and cloying. Now, Romanticism is a major, vital, complex movement, so that variability of signification still applies; but, reliably, that the English Romantics, even the "Satanic" second generation (Keats, Byron, Shelley) were positivists in comparison to Noir Apparition Poems like the Cheltenham Elegies would be difficult to deny.

Back to the two poems: the two versions of adolescence, one British and one American, one in third-person omniscient and one in first, are a study between adolescence retaining its wonted luster of freshness, joy, surprise, self-discovery, and unselfconscious risk, or adolescence degenerating into the space of already-thwarted dreams, premature (even atrophied) adulthood, and a sense of the crepuscular towards realizations of mortality even before adulthood is officially reached. This is part of what the Cheltenham Elegies are for— to acknowledge the ludicrousness of adolescents leading their lives like little adults, fornicating, wheeling and dealing, wielding material power in inappropriate ways, and attempting to cope with these realities in the total darkness ("basement") of non-existent family structures and no real guidance. The acknowledgement is made looking back, in elegiac fashion, rather than the front-lines reportage style of Answered Prayers, which covers similar ground (prematurely ripened adolescence) Symbolically (i.e. in the hallucinatory manner of the French Symbolists). It is an interesting torque, and one I did not necessarily plan, between Madeline emerging from her clothes "in" seaweed (while Porphyro watches her from her closet), while my antagonist emerges "from" the seaweed of what? Another shady tete-a-tete, or round of gossip?

Keats' version of "seaweed" is merely an optical illusion (i.e. that's how she looks to Porphyro from his vantage point in her closet), while my "seaweed" is a metaphor for an entire way of life— kids bedraggled by onerous, gross practical realities which cling to them whether they like it or not. The "mansion foul" where Madeline lives as a ward is (we may guess) no less corrupt than an average house in mostly upper-middle class Cheltenham; yet Madeline has retained her innocence. My anti-heroine swims through seaweed-strewn waters, and is far from innocent. If she is spiteful, it is because others are spiteful to her, leading to an accustomed nihilistic Cheltenham chain reaction. So

that, the steal I made, to transpose something from the Romantic canon into a Noir reality, inverts but also sheds light on where English language poetry is willing to go in the twenty-first century, which is into the total darkness of the American landscape, where the only joy is telling the truth about what shadows you happen to encounter. Elegy 420 also acts as an adequate presaging as to how the Great Recession will impose its strictures upon American individuals in the two-thousand Teens.

## Phenomenology: Cheltenham Elegies

To introduce the inquiry into phenomenology and phenomenological interest in the Cheltenham Elegies, I would like to include, in its totality, Apparition Poem #414, which is placed early in the 2012 Blazevox print book Cheltenham:

And out of this nexus, O sacred  
scribe, came absolutely no one.  
I don't know what you expected  
to find here. This warm, safe,  
comforting suburb has a smother  
button by which souls are unraveled.  
Who would know better than you?  
Even if you're only in the back of  
your mind asphyxiating. He looked  
out the window— cars dashed by  
on Limekiln Pike. What is it, he said,  
are you dead or do you think you're Shakespeare?

The chiasmus and comparison with Keats' Odes: the preponderant weight, in the Elegies, of humanism over formalism and drama over prosody establishes that the Elegiac Protagonist consolidate an identity over and against the identity of the Odal Protagonist. The "I" here is social, and brings his phenomenological biases and concerns into a social context. In 414, the Elegiac Protagonist is confronted with an Antagonist who sets into motion his own phenomenological interest or gambit. As per this phenomenological movement— the Antagonist in 414 maintains the conceit that he has made cognitive boundaries dissolve and has entered, and is speaking from within, the Elegiac Protagonist's mind ("Who would know better than you?/ Even if you're only in the back of/ your mind asphyxiating"). His conceits are thus multiple— first, that such a cognitive break-in is possible— that, by a phenomenological movement, one human mind can break into and inhabit another with authority— second, that the Antagonist has successfully jumped into and inhabited the mind of the Elegiac Protagonist— third, that he has not only broken into but (Zen) mastered this mind. He is magically in possession not only of his mind, but of someone else's.

In 414, tensions and ambiguities around this phenomenological confrontation are left open and unresolved— to what extent the Antagonist has (Zen) mastered the Protagonist's mind is not addressed. The truth, were it aired, might be quantifiable— as in, his mind is 50% mastered, or 60 or 70— but we are left to surmise these calculations for ourselves. It is also important to remember that this attempted cognitive break-in works as a metaphor for Cheltenham itself, both as an external, physical reality and as, on a phenomenological level, a mindscape for the Protagonist. The phenomenological reality of Cheltenham, for individuals, is that it is a dystopia of hostile aggression and violence, but also (conversely) of the mind's enchantment with darkness, deterioration, and decay. The included concrete detail, of cars dashing by on Limekiln Pike, fulfills a specific function in the Elegy— it breaks the phenomenological tension (whether the Antagonist speaks from within

the Protagonist's mind or not), and enumerates how an enclosed circuit (mind to mind) has been broken by an impersonal, outside the mind reality (cars, Limekiln Pike), demonstrating as well the obdurate hardness of outside the mind realities (the drabness of cars and of Limekiln Pike), and that the Antagonist now (rightly or wrongly) feels himself moved back into his own mind. Important with Keats: his outside the mind realities are almost always beautiful, conventionally enchanting ones (forests, mountains, birds, trees, etc). Outside the mind realities in the Cheltenham Elegies tend to be cold, hard, eerie, or even repulsive ones; but redeemed by superior truthfulness as regards humanity and the human condition. Back to 414: once the attempted cognitive break-in ends, and the phenomenological tension (mind against mind) disperses, a sense of discretion is restored to the vignette. That the final interrogative iteration more or less concedes non-mastery is significant— and once again, because the answer to the question is left unspoken, the ambiguities and tensions of phenomenological combat (who is more inside the other's head) are left intact, alongside other levels inhering in the poem, such as its clustered approach to melopoeia.

## Phenomenology: Cheltenham Elegies (2)

In Elegy 261, there is a preponderant weight affixed to outside the mind realities (initially), and the imposition of outside the mind realities on the interior terrain of innocent kids:

Never one to cut corners about cutting  
corners, you spun the Subaru into a rough  
U-turn right in the middle of Old York Road  
at midnight, scaring the shit out of this self-  
declared “artist.” The issue, as ever, was  
nothing particular to celebrate. We could  
only connect nothing with nothing in our  
private suburban waste land. Here’s where  
the fun starts— I got out, motherfucker.  
I made it. I say “I,” and it works. But Old  
York Road at midnight is still what it is.  
I still have to live there the same way you do.

In an American suburb like Cheltenham, the landscape is mostly occupied by nothingness places— homogenized, generic strip malls and thoroughfares, along with neighborhood after neighborhood of undistinguished homes, parks, and schools. It is an outside the mind reality of entrenched nothing and nothingness— places which not only mean nothing to anyone, but which were specifically designed and manufactured to mean nothing to anyone— hostile places for kids with brains and imagination. Old York Road is the archetypal suburban pivot point— supporting commerce, facilitating different forms of traffic, but generic enough to guarantee that cognitive-affective attachment to Old York Road is extremely unlikely for those who use it. Connecting nothing with nothing, in 261, manifests the process by which the human mind, surrounded by nothing and nothingness outside the mind realities (soulless realities), internalizes nothingness also as an interior reality; having, under the weight of perpetual imposition, no choice but to do so. Once the nothingness of the suburban landscape is internalized, the mind’s affective and imaginative capacities grow numb, and subsist in a state of dormant torpor. When the hero/anti-hero of 261 pulls his rough u-turn in Old York Road, it is both to demonstrate rebellion against internalized nothingness and to (by risking death) express complicity with it. It is an ambiguous gesture, which also encompasses expression of an internal landscape incompletely homogenized with Cheltenham’s outside the mind tactility.

This is why, ultimately, 261 is a poem about, and Elegy for, brotherhood— neither character is so absorbed and assimilated into nothingness (Cheltenham) that a sense of humanity is lost, and the drama of the poem inheres of watching the Elegiac Protagonist connect (as an inversion) the “something” of bold-if-foolhardy rebellion against nothingness with the something of his own artistic triumph. Whether the hero/anti-hero has established an “I” which “works” we cannot determine. What we see, by the end of the twelfth line, is both triumphant and tragic— it is inferred that nothingness, when internalized at a young age, is impossible to completely eradicate in human



consciousness— thus, the Elegiac Protagonist still lives, on an internal cognitive-affective level, in a space vulnerable to the inferred plague. Over the course of the Elegy, we watch as Old York Road begins outside the mind and makes a phenomenological transition inside, moves from physical to metaphysical textual subsistence— and signifies identical nothingness realities in both realms. Likewise, between the two friends, the drama is initiated in physical reality and dissolves into a metaphysical or phenomenological drama between two interiors— who has managed to expel, and thus transcend, the most nothingness, and who has manifested more presence in the world. The Fancy-equivalent in this Elegy (to lasso in Keats' terminology) is this phenomenological dissolution from outside the mind into the mind's interior (a confrontation, rather than a break-in as in 414), from the physical into the metaphysical (especially as regards Old York Road, what it is), and the felt truthfulness of this dissolution, even if (as in 414), we complete the Elegy surrounded by unresolved tensions and ambiguities (never learning the current "location," inside or outside, of the hero/anti-hero), and the omnipresence of the banal.

## Preface: Apparition Poems

Though no sustained narrative buoys it up, Apparition Poems is meant to be sprawling, and epic. An American epic, even one legitimate on world levels, could only be one made up of disparate, seemingly irreconcilable parts— such a state of affairs being America's, too. The strains which chafe and collide in Apparition Poems are discrete— love poems, carnal poems, meta-poems, philosophical poems, etc. Forced to cohabitate, they make a clang and a roar together (or, as Whitman would have it, a “barbaric yawp”) which creates a permanent (for the duration of the epic) sense of dislocation, disorientation, and discomfort. This is enhanced by the nuances of individual poems, which are often shaped in the dialect of multiple meanings and insinuation. Almost every linguistic sign in Apparition Poems is bifurcated; either by the context of its relationship to other linguistic signs in the poems, or by its relationship to the epic whole of the book itself. If Apparition Poems is an epic, it is an epic of language; the combative adventure of multiple meanings, shifting contexts and perspectives, and the ultimate despair of the incommensurability of artful utterance with practical life in an era of material and spiritual decline. It is significant that the poems are numbered rather than named; it emphasizes the fragmentary (or apparitional) nature of each, its place in a kind of mosaic, rather than a series of wholes welded together by chance or arbitrary willfulness (as is *de rigueur* for poetry texts).

This is the dichotomy of Apparition Poems— epics, in the classical sense, are meant to represent continuous, cohesive action— narrative continuity is essential. Apparition Poems is an epic in fragments— every poem drops us, in medias res, into a new narrative. If I choose to call Apparition Poems an epic, not in the classical (or Miltonic) sense but in a newfangled, American mode (which nonetheless maintains some classical conventions), it is because the fragments together create a magnitude of scope which can comfortably be called epic. The action represented in the poems ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the heroic to the anti-heroic; there are dramatic monologues set amidst the other forms, so that the book never strays too far from direct and directly represented humanism and humanistic endeavor. The American character is peevish if not able to compete— so are the characters here. Life degenerates into a contest and a quest for victory, even in peaceful or solitary contexts. Yet, if the indigenous landscape is strange and surrealistic, it is difficult to maintain straightforward competitive attitudes— consciousness has to adjust while competing, creating a quandary away from the brazen singularity which has defined successful, militaristic America in the world.

Suddenly, American consciousness is beleaguered by shifting sands and multiple meanings— an inability, not only to be singular but to perceive singular meanings. Even as multiplications are resisted, everything multiplies, and often into profit loss, rather than profit gain. The epic, fragmentary narrative of Apparition Poems is a down-bound, tragic one, rather than a story of valor or heroism. The consolation for loss of material consonance is a more realistic vision of the world and of human life— as a site of/for dynamism, rather than stasis, of/for multiplicity, rather than singularity. Apparition Poems is a vista into “multiple America” from Philadelphia, its birth-place, and a city beleaguered also by multiple visions of itself. No city in America has so much historical heft; nor did any American city suffer so harsh a demotion in the brutally materialistic twentieth

century. Yet, as *Apparition Poems* suggests, if a new America is to manifest in the twenty-first century, it might as well begin in Philadelphia. If the epic focuses on loss followed by more loss, rather than eventual, fulsome triumph, then so be it. And if *Apparition Poems* as fragmentary epic imposes a lesson, it is this— the pursuit of singularity in human life is a fool's game; the truth is almost always, and triumphantly, multiple.

## Preface: Quiddities

Ezra Pound famously remarked that when poetry strays too far from music, it ceases to be poetry. I would like to opine, as a tangent thought to his, that when the higher arts stray too far from philosophy, they cease to be the higher arts. Philosophy, no less than literature, is a series of narratives; and that higher-end, intellectually ambitious literature should twirl and torque meaningfully around philosophical quandaries and discourses is something that English-language poetry has forgotten in the last half-century (and I mean “pure” philosophy, as differentiated from literary theory or aesthetics). The leveling process by which no distinctions between high and low art are made, as a precondition to post-modernity’s preponderance, has effaced interest in the “fundamental questions” in favor of narrow, nihilistic ironies and corrosive but intellectually superficial cultural critiques. But that, without reprising Romanticism, English language poetry can reclaim interest in pure philosophy and the crux questions of human existence, is the assumption these poems make. As such, they are angled against everything in the English language oeuvre after T.S. Eliot’s “Four Quartets,” including the array of Deconstructive, non-narrative poetics, which confuse the respective (though not completely antithetical) functions of philosophy and poetry in an excessive and demeaning alienation of the aesthetic.

How my approach differs from Eliot’s is this— rather than compressing the sensory data relevant to his inquiry into succinct forms, he prefers to paint on a wide canvas. The sharp points of his piece, often expressed in axioms and aphorisms, suffer a dissipated sense of being too generalized; an intermittent chiasmus with the tactile is represented, but focus is all too often lost in digression and imprecisely motivated meanderings. Many of Eliot’s axioms are, in fact, quotations (from, among others, Heraclitus and St. John of the Cross); and his Modernistic allusiveness chips away at the potential philosopher’s stone of original cognition for him. The poems in “Quiddities” are compressed and formed in the manner of John Keats’ Odes; not, of course, that the poems are odes, just that they are meant to convey mystery-in-brevity; and a sense, however sodden with disillusionment and despair, of enchantment. For enchantment in intellectual mystery, where English language verse is concerned, few poems but these Apparition Poems after the English Romantics will suffice. Modernism and post-modernism presented many shortcuts to a sense of engaged cognition; but the full enchantment of the depths and mysteries of the human mind and its powers of perception and discernment was not perceived or represented. Impulses which could have led to these representations were deemed too earnest, in a milieu and context which prized irony, and mistrust of any form of depth, especially subjectively maintained cognitive-affective depth, with or against impulses which could be deemed Romantic.

If Quiddities is not merely a reprise of Romantic impulses, it is because the mysteries the poems encompass and close on are not comforting. Wordsworth’s conception of intellectual enchantment is positivist; he follows a pedagogical path to teach us, with a discrete, didactic, and circumscribed system, how to think. This is the thematic backbone of “The Prelude,” his masterpiece. Intellectual man, he informs us, can always fall back on Nature; and Nature has the capacity to endlessly replenish intellectual man. The other major Romantics offer more naïve versions of the same intermittently comforting premise; even if Byron and Keats have ways of building levels of permanent encroaching darkness into their visions, too. The intellectual enchantment in Quiddities ends in itself; the poems offer no system as a transcendental antidote, and nothing is endlessly replenishing in the poems except the endless montage of thought (thoughts on more thoughts). The enchantment offered by Quiddities is strange and (in a contradictory way) bitter; cognition has no

recourse but to recur endlessly, in a sensory landscape as blasted and dystopic as the poems themselves. To circle back to Eliot again, where *Quiddities* is concerned; it is cognition over the (or a) waste land. But that the human intellect can and should develop its own kind of narcissism, over the dictatorial narcissism of the senses, especially in America, is presupposed. The human mind is the only enchanted place with any genuine permanence for mankind; that is the key and primordial supposition here.

## Reap Together

As to how I have designated possible discussions/discourses about Apparition Poems; applying the moniker *noir* to them, in order to explicate the aesthetic terrain they inhabit; I would like to designate a possible chiasmus between “noir,” as defined in textual practice by me, and the theoretical underpinnings of English Romanticism. What noir and Romanticism share is substantial— a sense of mysticism or enchantment in/with cognition itself, or cognitive processes; also, the engagement-in-cognition between textuality and the human mind, and the mind’s enchantment with levels of textual transparency and opacity, back and forth; and a generalized sense of the necessity of dealing directly, to a greater or lesser extent, with philosophy and philosophical issues in texts maintaining artistic/aesthetic consonance. In order to develop this discourse, I would like to parse ‘The Solitary Reaper’ by William Wordsworth, in a dialectical fusion with Apparition Poem #1070. The issues of phallocentrism-in-text, imposition on the feminine, “theft” of the feminine, rusticity, chastity, and sincerity starkly given antithesis by urbanity, sensuality, and artifice, fused into meditations on textual innocence and experience, virginity and consummation, and ultimate female empowerment in noir over Romanticism, are the ones which will lead us, hopefully, to a fulfilled dialectic.

Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands:  
A voice so thrilling ne’er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago:  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of to-day?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again?

Whate’er the theme, the Maiden sang  
As if her song could have no ending;

I saw her singing at her work,  
And o'er the sickle bending;—  
I listened, motionless and still;  
And, as I mounted up the hill,  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.

I said, "I can't  
even remember  
the last time I  
was excited, how  
can I associate  
ideas?"

She pulled  
out a gun, a tube  
of oil, and an air  
cushion,

and it was  
a spontaneous  
overflow,

powerfully  
felt, in which we  
reaped together—

To clarify: "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" is a famous phrase from Wordsworth's Preface. If the two poems together initiate a sort of wrestling match or scuffle, it is because inversions in the two texts lead to a kind of thematic impasse. When Wordsworth (or his protagonist/"I") co-opts the song of the Solitary Reaper, the interaction is a kind of unconsummated ("chaste") one— she does not know someone is listening, and Wordsworth seems eager to keep it that way. We are drawn in by her rusticity, the sense that (as Wordsworth would have us believe, and as he explicated in his Preface) the rustic evinces a superior purity/innocence to the urban, and the plaintive quality of her song advertises a kind of emotional grandeur or gravitas, a superior depth to her femininity.

The woman in #1080 is our antithesis. Because what is being presented to the reader would seem to encompass levels of sleaze ("gun, tube of oil, air cushion"), it is easy to miss that this protagonist is proud that he does not have to surreptitiously co-opt something (song or skin) from his heroine; the sense that she, out of her own urbanity, anticipates the need for a full consummation, or modicum of experience. Also important is that she initiates the action; whether we find it sleazy or not, she is in a more empowered position *vis a vis* the male than Wordsworth would ever allow himself to be. This form of female empowerment is threaded again, as a motif, through Equations, released a year after Apparition Poems. And is, ultimately, what a noir sensibility has over Romantic sincerity, which tends towards chastity: the fully realized, mature notice and transubstantiation into text of the adult, and adult levels of awareness, both of the body (in noir, an experienced body) and of levels of metaphoric awareness which Wordsworth would not have missed (that each realization of the

feminine is a realization of a certain kind of text, textuality, and textual practice, bound together by processes of incision and receptivity conjoined in a single writerly consciousness, male or female).

By having me raise a “plaintive” voice to my Muse, as I drolly invert another line from Wordsworth’s Preface (“as to the way the mind associates ideas in a state of excitement”), I feminize myself so that my compatriot may incise into me her own experience, or equation, of the situation at hand. Thus, the sleaze levels are superficial; my text empowers a sensualized, adult woman to enjoy (“reap together”) an encounter both more tactile and more textually fulfilling than the encounters both in Lyrical Ballads and in Wordsworth’s Prelude, which features, on a general level, few interactions at all, and remains mired in Romanticism’s narcissistic obsession with the phallogentric text, and with male assertions.



## The Arbitrary and the Artful

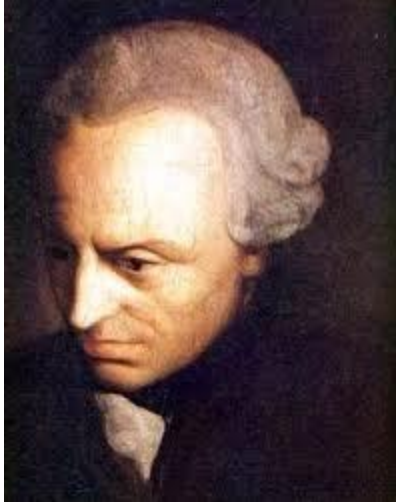
That language, used to create musical effects in poetry, is not arbitrary; does, in fact, depend on meaningful or artful arrangement to establish and consolidate its effects; chafes against the confines of Deconstructionist discourse. The Deconstructionist commonplace, derived from Saussure— that linguistic signifiers are arbitrary (and this dictum is usually presented as iron-clad)— does not deal adequately with either the musical potentialities of language, or how they have already manifested significantly in the lyrical poems produced both by French Symbolism and English Romanticism. Deconstructionism is notoriously soft on dealing with poetry in general— key texts like Roland Barthes *The Pleasures of the Text* lean heavily on fiction, as Barthes deals (for example) with Proust and Robbe-Grillet rather than Baudelaire. Poetry, especially lyrical poetry, is a direct threat to the sanctioned discourses of Deconstructionism— as a tactile, manifest testament to not-arbitrary language (which advertises, in both its intentions and its effects, its own artfulness and non-arbitrary quality), created by individuals, often to make metaphysical inquiries, and to induce sensual, visceral cognitive pleasure and enchantment simultaneously.

Lyrical poetry signifies a set of imperatives or complexes— aesthetic interests which, when fulfilled, can appear serendipitous without stumbling into the disarray of the random; and, the more exquisite the verbal music produced, the less random it seems. The materiality of this kind of text (be it Keats or Baudelaire) has its own meaning and purpose indigenous to it; it is self-sustaining and self-justifying, and manifests its purpose in its own material subsistence. Deconstructionists would, if they could, disavow lyricism; however, to disavow lyricism is to disavow all music; to discard Keats and Baudelaire would be to discard Bach and Beethoven, as well. Music can be justified qua music or qua language. Roland Barthes leaning heavily on fiction is suspect— both because fiction reinforces master narratives (of cohesiveness, of reality) of human life which may be false, and because novelistic language does not have the hinge to being *irreplaceable, singular, individual* which accomplished lyricism does. Unless Deconstructionism in the twenty-first century can develop a discursive chiasmus with poetry and the lyrical, there will remain suspicions that the motivations of/for Deconstructionist discourse are destructive, rather than creative ones; and that the Deconstructionist elevation of fiction over poetry has in it the contradiction of willful ignorance of musical language (*melopoeia*) which, in both its motivations and its effects, is not arbitrary. It is another frightening realization of an alignment between Deconstructionism and post-modernity— an alignment based, metaphorically speaking, on killing.



# POSTULATES AND EMPTY SPACES ADAM FIELED





## KANT AND CONTRADICTION

Though the evidence from Kant's dialectics suggests that substance, that-which-is, causality, is accidental; and furthermore, that, if substance is accidental, meaning indigenously inhering in substance is unlikely; it also then becomes true that a question arises as to the practicality of interrogating the posited null set around inherent meaning in substance, that-which-is, from the side of complete and totalized immersion in substance/causality; and if meaning is seen to inhere in the possible meaningless, or not; or if the beyond-us which must be the antecedent to all-that-is necessitates a practical cognitive withdrawal.

If substance/causality is an accident, then it is also necessarily the result of a contingency, or, strictly speaking, the contingent; the non-existence of substance subsisted as a possibility. What inheres in the contingent is the possibility of non-existence; yet accidents/contingencies are, or tend to be, contained and delimited by/within discrete successions within increments of time; the possibility, within contingencies, of non-existence, conditioned by an antithetical result (existence), seems also to necessitate discretion, discrete successions in which a change occurred (non-existence into existence). But all-that-is, substance, causality, necessarily always was and will be; time creates a formal condition of indiscretion, and endless series of successions. The Ontological Contradiction built into Kant's dialectics is this— *substance/causality cannot be involved in contingency; yet, if substance/causality is an accident, it must be, or have been.*

The second contradiction I would like to posit in/from Kant's dialectics is a smaller one; it has to do with potential knowledge of the thing-in-itself, the noumena; which subsists as simple substance/causality for Kant, in such a way that we can establish and maintain knowledge of the thing-in-itself as just that— simple substance/causality. What leads Kant and his dialectics into contradiction is the inverse assertion— that the noumena/thing-in-itself is unknowable, which implies an inherent possibility of complexity-within-substantiality. Thus, the Contradiction of Complex Substance subsists— *an unknowable noumena is, possibly, a complex reality, whose substance is complex; and the assumed homogeneity of simple substance comprising noumena may or may not be in accordance with what we do not, and cannot know.*



### **A postulate derived from a reading of Schopenhauer**

Substance, causality, that-which-is, can be represented from two sides- as abstract object for a perceiving subject, who projects the a priori forms of time and space onto it; that is, from the side of existence, the posited existence of substance, matter, causality; and, represented from the side of existence, matter extends infinitely (or into infinity) for a perceiving subject into an infinite past and future, and through an infinite present moment; or then as a non-object, perceived by no perceiving subject, not subject to the a priori formal imposition of time and space; that is, from the side of pure subsistence, the posited pure subsistence of substance, matter, causality; and represented from an imagination of pure subsistence, matter takes on a "void form," as self-subsistent, or as an unimaginable void, subsistence within a void state; or as *merely subsistent matter*; so that matter, substance, causality, without a subject's imposition, *both is and is not, must be and must not be.*

Adam Fieled, 2014



### **Kant, Space Between, and Substance**

Substance is that which is; against “appearance”/the phenomenal/phenomenon.

The evidence from Kant’s “Critique of Pure Reason” suggests that that which is, is. Substance subsists; even as forms change in the succession of time.

The evidence from Kant’s dialectics in “Critique” also suggests that substance, that which is, is an accident; that which subsists, subsists accidentally. What is unconditioned, in possible cognition, leads back to the senses, and experience (empiricism), in such a way to suggest that cognitive determinations of an ultimate cause for substance (cause for causes, causality) cannot be granted except as forced, ungrounded principles, modes of dogma, and with no empirical or credible transcendental connection to that-which-is, in its subsistence, accidental or otherwise.

If substance, that-which-is, causality, subsists out of or from (emanates, so to speak, from) an accident, Space Between must also subsist, attendant upon substance/causes, out of/determined by the same accident, or state (time/space coordinate) of arbitrary subsistence.

Space Between, thus, may be seen as a transcendental possibility built into an accident, or the accidental nature of that-which-is, or all-that-is, causality, substance.

Space Between and its progeny, the meta-rational, imposes the magnetism of causes (a magnetism of causes) to causes, substance to substance, to perpetuate the subsistence of substance over durations of time and expanses of space; substance is thus, not a discrete accident, but one which changes over succeeding times and time-zones (spaces).

It is in the nature of Space Between to corrode/dissolve appearances in a kind of acid; its appearance reinforces, represents, and manifests the ineluctable quality of the accidental, substance, causality.

The accidental, substance, causality, is, in fact, ineluctable, both in its appearance and in its subsistence— building upwards or downwards from different causes— and Space Between is a particular form of a priori intuition of space, drawing substances apart to re-weld them, transcendentalizing the empirical.

What Space Between possesses us between thoughts is still substance, and subsistence.

Adam Field, 2014



### **Postulate: Against Schopenhauer's Conception of Will**

Schopenhauer clearly aligns causality, substance, matter, with his conception of will; which he posits as the permanent interior life, being, and form of causality, substance, matter. If we take causality, substance, matter to exist, or to be in existence, then will, as defined by Schopenhauer, can work as a precise, discrete designation. Schopenhauer's "will" implies the conditions of existence; a priori impositions of time, space, and subject/object alterity lines; relativity, competition; however, if we take matter, substance, causality to subsist, or to be in (mere) subsistence, then will, as Schopenhauer defines it, cannot work as a precise designation; Schopenhauer's "will" denies the formal conditions of subsistence, set against existence and as I have already enumerated them, to the extent that they are capable of representation.

\*\*\*on the cover of the pdf: "Empty Space" by Abby Heller-Burnham\*\*\*





# Conceptions From Kant Adam Fieled





## Kant and Theology

To explicate the manner in which Kant uses dialectical reasoning to address theology— and, in such a way that an argument could be made in response that Kant deifies his own cognitive capacities— the question remains as to whether Kant's intellectual ambition exceeds what his dialectics can accomplish, and if the inclusion of theology as an issue in "Critique of Pure Reason" is a mistake.

To the extent that the standardized and normative theological arguments against dialectical reasoning (and, implicitly, against Kant's three-tiered cognitive model, sensibility-understanding-pure reason) can be employed against Kant's own dialectics, arguments in which inhere the doctrines of transcendental faith and its principles as a substitute for principles of pure reason developed as ascended from sensibility and understanding, and that Kant grounds his paradigm and system in empiricism, rather than in a denial of empiricism as a foundational level, Kant's inclusion of a theology-targeting dialectic can be considered a rather curious one. My argument for the necessity of Kant's address to theology has to do with its rhetorical heft. As in: Kant, of course, knows the means by which the theologians can, in their own conceit, surpass his system— but for those undecided, who hover between theological and empirical-based modes/approaches, Kant estimates that his dialectical proofs towards the establishment of well-grounded (pure) principles will be weighed in the cognitive balance as both more impressive and more convincing than the sense-transcendent approach espoused by his adversaries.

Thus, there is a rhetorical necessity to Kant's inclusion of an address to, and refutation of, standardized and normative theological intellection; and, since the rhetorical necessity is genuine, Kant is pursuing an intelligible imperative in his inclusion, even as its seeming vulnerability merits interrogation and an address of its own.

Adam Fieled, 2014



## **Kant and Contradiction Pt. 2: The Noumena**

There is a central contradiction inhering in Kant's conceptions of the noumena/thing-in-itself in his "Critique of Pure Reason." Kant asserts two postulates which contradict each other directly— 1) that the noumena/thing-in-itself is unknowable; 2) that the interior consciousness inhering in the human race, beyond the phenomenal appearance of individual human beings, is universally determinable by Kant's conceptions of sensibility, understanding, and reason; and, as a principle cemented under the aegis of pure reason (elevated above sensibility and understanding), that the noumena/thing-in-itself can never be cogitated as object for a subject, even as a first cause of their own internal existence/subsistence. That the noumena/thing-in-itself should simultaneously subsist as both unknowable and universally determinable is an internal dialectical contradiction capable of this synthesis— Kant's conceptions of the noumena/thing-in-itself must remain in the discursive realms of the sensibility and the understanding for him; principles of pure reason derived from investigations of the noumena/thing-in-itself do not (cannot, for Kant) inhere in his "Critique of Pure Reason." The synthesis of the essential contradiction he enumerates remains conditioned enough by experience to render cognitive

ascension into the top tier, where subsists pure reason, null and void, where the noumena is concerned.

Adam Fieled, 2014



### Aesthetics and the Kantian Cognition Model

3  
Reason (pure)  
Principles beyond experience  
Totalities/absolutes

2  
Understanding  
Dialectics/syntheses  
Conceptions from experience

1  
Sensibility  
A priori intuitions (space/time)  
Phenomena/empiricism

3  
Maximum complexity  
in accordance with  
maximum coherence

2  
Complexities  
dialectics out of  
thematic materials

1  
Coherence derived  
from sensibility  
expressed formally

If a shape and form were to be granted to the cognitive model presented by Kant in his “Critique of Pure Reason,” it would accord structurally with an ascending triadic pathway, with a one, a two, and a three station. The first station would be determined by sensibility, as enumerated in Kant’s Transcendental Aesthetic— empirical/experiential

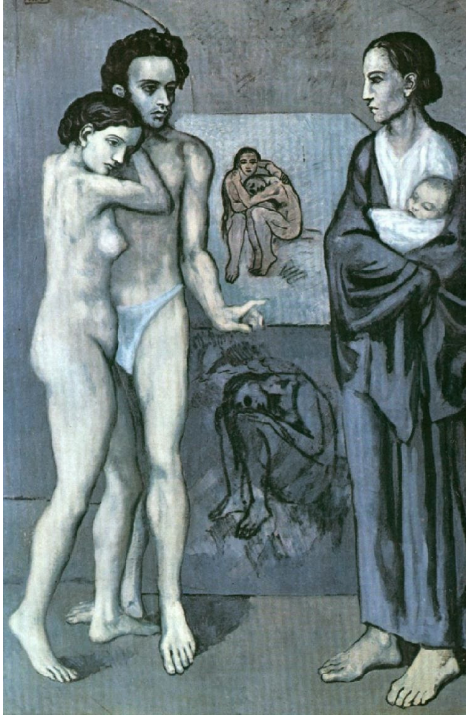
intuitions, formed from cognitively imposed spatial and temporal intuitions of phenomena, existing in/from these parameters. The second station, placed above the first, would be distinguished by the cognitive functions of understanding— processes of dialectical reasoning, and conceptions derived thusly from synthesis-functions— all conditioned by empirical intuitions “imported upwards” from station one. The highest station, the third inhering in this triadic cognitive paradigm, is reserved for the principles of pure reason— defined by transcendence past all experience/intuition, distilled from the dialectical reasoning of station two or distilled synthesis-functions generally.

As to how this relates to aesthetics/aesthetic symbolization— the Kantian triadic, ascending cognitive scale can be applied usefully and fruitfully to aesthetics as well. If we want to make the mirroring process precise (if reduced in rigor and intensity from the initial mold)— on the first station I would place coherence/coherence of symbolization. By this, I mean coherence derived from aesthetic sensibility— intelligibility of, in expression, raw formal/structural awareness, passion, conflict, backbones of intelligibility; also, characters and characterization. On the second station in our translation model could be placed complexities, as they inhere in aesthetic symbolization— dialectics, prosaic and otherwise, born from inner psychologies of individuals and collectives, from different forms of exterior/interior conflict, and political, sexual, and psychological levels of theme; leaving room for, in the highest forms of representational art, the most cognitively challenging and satisfying forms of (tragic, more often than not) synthesis. The third tier, which could translate pure reason into pure aesthetic symbolization, is the most ambiguous— how I would posit it should be occupied is this— *when a maximum of aesthetic complexity accords with a maximum of aesthetic coherence, this constitutes the purest form of aesthetic symbolization.*

This formulation— maximum coherence/maximum complexity— rarifies what works of aesthetic symbolization can be said to accord with the top station, as I have configured it. In the English language: Hamlet, Paradise Lost, the Odes, and The Prelude fit the parameters; most other attempts at sophisticated verbal symbolization falter either towards excessive coherence sans complexity or excessive complexity sans coherence. As to how the bounds of this balance (complexity/coherence) are determined— obviously opinions will differ from critic to critic, but that the balance-function should constitute a top station on a triadic hierarchy would seem to be, among other valid formulations, difficult to refute, where high art/serious aesthetic symbolization is concerned.

Adam Fieled, 2014

\*\*\*affixed to this piece is Rembrandt’s “Night Watch”\*\*\*



## Kant and Emotion

In “Critique of Pure Reason,” Kant postulates a cognitive model of the human psyche, but not an affective one; sensibility-understanding-pure reason does not allow for the influence upon cognition of affect. As to how solidly grounded empiricism could be able to incorporate affect into a cognitive model; allowance would have to be made for the interstitial connection (a causal connection, literally) between sensible perception, as it ascends to conceptions/conceptual understanding, and results whose responses connect, in varying degrees and forms, phenomena and noumena, effects and causes, and the boundary-dissolution this entails.

It is likely that a cognitive model which incorporates the effects of affect, and the interstitial relationship resultant between phenomena and noumena, effects and causes, could alter the cohesiveness, solidity, and regularity of Kant’s cognitive model; and that an empirical treatment of affect, in having to move from effects to semi-comprehensible causes, would be forced, in determinative modes, to transcendentalize itself; thus, Kant’s cognitive model would be forced into a self-contradictory state, against the maintenance of its original integrity. The

interstices which connect causes and effects would need to be postulated, one way or another; in accordance with the phenomenal manifestations of affect, and moving them from sense/sensibility perception towards understanding and then reason.

To work towards principles of affect— dialectics of affect— while the possibility was investigated by the Greeks in their dialogues, this work has little substantial correlate in modern philosophy. Because affect is unstable, inconsistent, and confounds the boundaries between effects and causes, it is difficult to affix determinate bounds on; and, because affect constitutes the most direct response to sensibility, and thus accompanies cognitions into the realms of understanding and pure reason, its place as a destabilizing agent in Kant's cognition-model system is both assured and determinative of an imperative towards interrogation and investigation.

Adam Fieled, 2014

\*\*\*affixed to this post is Picasso's "La Vie"; affixed to the pdf cover is Picasso's "Blue Guitarist"\*\*\*



# ON KANT AND THE SUBJECT ADAM FIELED

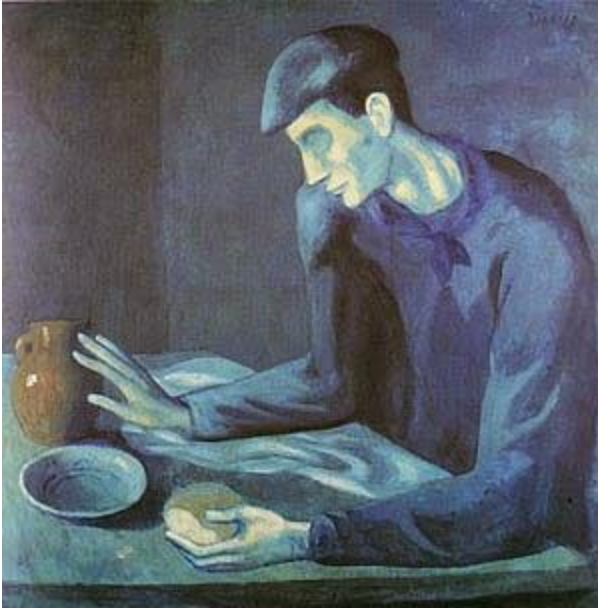




The split posited by Kant between phenomena and noumena, effects and causes, creates a strange kind of *reductio ad absurdum* around subjects and subjectivity. The subject, in Kant, owing to his/her phenomenal appearance in a world of things, is (exists/subsists) as phenomena and noumena, effect and cause- yet, self-reflection, originating from conceptions of the understanding (employing the Kantian cognitive model) reveals the subject (bound to the unity of apperception or cogito) to evince the ability to objectify his/her own consciousness as an object-in-itself, as phenomena and effect- yet this consciousness, inaccessible to others, constitutes the subject's substance/causality for all perceiving subjects other than itself; in other words, the noumena, the thing-in-itself, is also an object for the perceiving subject in whom it inheres- creating the aforementioned *reductio ad absurdum* when the dialectic, for logic, is around self-reflection and potentialities of the subject's self-knowledge. It leads to the ineluctable reflection, for the perceiving subject- is the noumena there at all; and, if it is, is it completely inaccessible even for the perceiving subject, owing to the constraints of sensibility and understanding?

In another fashion: is the noumena, the thing-in-itself (substance, causality) so merely a subsistent, rather than existent, entity, that what is behind phenomena/effects are a *reductio ad absurdum* of more effects, more phenomena, and substance impossible even to hypothesize; and, if what constitutes the noumena is subsistent matter (half perceptible/half imperceptible), why the noumena should be presupposed as anything (in our dialectics) but this posited chain of effects/phenomena, in terms of what is available to our understanding; and, if this is so, why Kant's distinction can never touch the subject in such a way that, through self-reflection, the noumena can be grasped or encompassed. In other words: the subject cannot necessarily merely be the noumena for other subjects, or for itself. As to whether subjects should project likeness onto other subjects- the sameness in human subjectivity, as judged by the phenomena of consistent human

behavior, may be determinative of the dialectical necessity of a quantitative judgment on this level- of half-causes, half-noumena, half-substance; if Kant's conceptions are to address the empirical reality of human subjectivity to the fullest possible extent.



One of the more interesting aspects of Kant's positing of the Subject is its perpetual condition of non-stasis, of motion. This subjectivity-as-moving target in human consciousness inheres, in Kant's schemas, because what he calls the unity of apperception (the cogito, "I think") must constantly re-position itself between levels one and two of his cognitive model (sensibility and understanding). The Subject, within his/her cognitions, interprets the manifold of intuitions drawn from spatial/temporally determined sensibility as a mode of vertical ascension into the formation of conceptions of the understanding as a function of judgment-within-understanding. In other words, the Subject inheres as a go-between for the functional interplay and interaction of levels one and two of the Kantian cognitive model. The point of interest here is the Subject's unrest, non-stasis; and what the significations of a non-static model of Subjects and subjectivity might be. As to the connection between the noumena and the unity of apperception (substance and Ego), as it is posited here- there arises a striking and superficially unlikely contradiction. The noumena, substance, causality accompanies the phenomenal appearance of objects but without being affected by their changing forms- in other words, substance/causality is not supposed to be subject to formal change. The unity of apperception, site/home-base of the Ego in human consciousness, does nothing but move, darting back and forth perpetually between cognitive levels. Thus, there must be a disjunct between the human Ego, as distinguished in human consciousness by Kant, and whatever of the noumena, substance, causality lies hidden behind the phenomenal appearances of interior or exterior temporally/spatially limited forms.

The posited disjunct between the human Ego and the noumena cannot be healed by any readily available connective cognitive tissue. It points back to an issue I raised in the first portion of these notes- whether there is a visible route towards secure belief in the noumena, as defined by Kant, or not. The route to solidifying the noumena, in the manner that Kant has solidified and consolidated the theoretical apparatuses of cognition itself, via his three-tiered model, is one which must first establish a secure relationship to this

model- and the mystery inhering in how this might be done has to do with the incompatibility of states of rest and unrest, stasis and dynamism, implacable stillness and change.





For Kant, the noumena is cloaked in mystery- and his cognitive model forces him, against his own judgmental capacities, into a contradictory conceptual position. He assumes that there are universals inhering in human consciousness, beyond his own consciousness, while also stipulating implicitly that assuming universality is both necessary for discourse and contradictory to his own premises about the inaccessibility of the noumena, behind phenomenal appearances. What the systems of organized religion, and some systems of philosophy, claim- principles of pure reason/pure conceptions of understanding about/around the noumena- is an issue which Kant invests textual time in debunking, but without placing his own conjectures in their stead. Thus, the central mystery inhering in "Critique of Pure Reason," the noumena- is one that Kant appears to respect enough not to address. That cognition, at all points and on all levels of his three-tiered cognitive model (sensibility-understanding-reason), ends with phenomena, and that the noumena can go so far as to be named and nothing else- renders the textual situation around Kant and the Subject rather shrouded- especially because the Subject, we see, must have some inherent relationship to substance, causality, an interior past the merely phenomenal. This is why the book's central premise/conceit- that very little in human consciousness can, in a rigorous and properly grounded way, pass from the conceptions of the understanding into the solid principles of pure reason- makes the sideways acknowledgment that the Subject, for Kant (or raw subjectivity) is one that is troublesome to manage, even for the most disciplined, and orderly, forms of understanding.

On the mystery of the noumena- and to bring Kant's inquiry, somewhat ironically, back to Deconstructionism- Kant evinces a kind of impressive textual modesty, against the grain of the authority with which he presents his Transcendental Aesthetic. Specifically as a text, "Critique of Pure Reason" has a premise as much negative as positive- to demonstrate the lack of grounded rigor in the vast majority of posited principles and premises, and the cognitive structures capable of generating principles to begin with. The balance, in "Critique," between textual modesty (around the noumena) and iron-willed

ambition is a unique one; veering to the left or right of arrogance (as Schopenhauer does not), while never eschewing the imperative to command.

Adam Fieled 2014